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ABSTRACT

The lessons in the teacher's guide about the Bible's Old Testament are based on historic and scientific scholarship and, to avoid a sectarian point of view, focus on the factual data generated by academic research. The lessons are based on what is known about the nature of oral tradition, recent archaeological findings, and the academic biblical research that has been ongoing for almost two centuries. The teacher's guide is divided into four sections: (1) "Introduction" (Religious Belief and Scientifically-Oriented Scholarship; Teaching and Religious Bias; Parents and Local Religious Leaders; Personal Student Beliefs; Dealing with Miraculous Happenings and Abhorrent Practices); (2) "Thoughts on Methods of Instruction" (Pictures and Preparation; Repetition, Memorization and Drill; Evaluating Student Work; Conclusion); (3) "Lecture/Discussion Materials" (Understanding the Origin of a Supernatural Story; Religion of Zoroaster; Religious Change: Judaism and the Babylonian Captivity; Ancient and Modern World Views; Comparing Western (Abrahamic) Religions with South Asian Faiths (Hinduism and Buddhism); Golden Rule); and (4) "Quizzes, Timelines, and Maps." The student lesson plan series on the Old Testament is designed to provide students with an understanding of how, from a scholar's perspective, the Bible came into existence. The lessons seek to provide students with simple but authoritative answers to questions about the characteristics of oral history upon which much of the Bible is based, when various parts of it were written, how its translation into Greek changed its meaning, and when it became finalized for Jews and for Christians. The first segment, "To the Student and Teacher: Setting the Stage," is followed by 13 chapters: (1) "Geographic World of the Bible"; (2) "Dating Bible Stories and Oral Tradition"; (3) "Israelites Before 1000 BCE"; (4) "Before Israel and Judah 1000 to 900 BCE"; (5) "Israel and Judah 900 to 600 BCE"; (6) "Hebrews, Babylonians, Persians 600-500 BCE"; (7) "Jews and Persians 500 to 300 BCE"; (8) "Jews, Greeks and Hasmonaeans 300 to 50 BCE"; (9) "Jews, Romans and the World From 50 BCE On"; (10) "Old Testament and Christianity"; (11) "Jewish and Christian Canons"; (12) "Old Testament and the Koran"; and (13) "Summary and Conclusion." Each chapter includes notes. An appendix lists Bible books (when composed and material type/historical setting). (Contains 28 references.) (BT)

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History of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

Current Academic Understandings

SO 034 275

Brant Abrahamson
Fred Smith

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To the Student and Teacher: Setting the Stage

Jews, Christians and Muslims believe that the universe is the creation of one God who dwells in a spiritual realm outside of the created universe. They believe "he" created the universe where intelligent creatures might arise with whom he could communicate. Through communication they believe this spiritual God provides them with Divine guidelines for living.

This communication take many forms. Direct contact comes through prayers, meditation, mystical experiences, and a wide variety of ceremonies. Jews, Christians and Muslims also believe that God first communicated with the ancestors of the Jews several thousand years ago. They believe the Hebrew Bible--the Christian Old Testament--is a record of this communication.[1]

This series of lessons is designed to provide students with an understanding of how, from a scholar's perspective, this Bible came into existence. We seek to provide students with simple but authoritative answers to questions such as these:[2]

1. What are the characteristics of oral history upon which much of the Hebrew Bible is based?
2. How accurate is the Middle Eastern history that it contains?
3. When were the various parts of it written and under what circumstances?
4. How did its translation into Greek change its meaning?
5. When did it become "finalized" for Jews? For Christians?

We stick to natural cause and effect. We do not attempt to deal with questions about Divine inspiration. It may be that a cosmic God has "spoken" to humans through the Bible. It may be that the worldly events described in the Bible can be explained by miracles, sudden Divine revelations and the like. But, this religious understanding is outside the scope of our inquiry. Therefore, these lessons may be quite different from those students learn in synagogues, churches or from previous studies.

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[1] We use the title, "Hebrew Bible" and "Old Testament" interchangeably and about equally. Both Jews and Christians consider the material to be holy. *Bible* is a word that comes from *biblia*, which is Latin for the Greek word meaning "book." The Greeks called paper made from papyrus *byblos* because papyrus was imported from Biblos, a Phoenician port city on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea in what is now Lebanon. Sets of written papers were called *biblia* --as in bibliography.

[2] The authors of the booklet called The *Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide* (published by the National Bible Association and the First Amendment Center) state quite clearly that "Any class about the Bible must be taught in an *objective*, academic manner."

As presented in these lessons, most books in the Hebrew Bible slowly emerged from centuries of oral traditions. They are the result of historical circumstances that existed in the Middle East beginning in the second millennium BCE.[3] Generalizations in these lessons are tentative. Scholars disagree on many points, and current understandings are subject to change as new archaeological discoveries are made and historical generalizations are modified. This qualified way of studying the Bible is quite different from viewing it as a source of unchangeable Divine dictates.

This kind of analysis of the Hebrew Bible is not new. Trying to determine when and under what circumstances biblical scrolls came into being is an age-old endeavor.

To illustrate: The Bible begins with Genesis, and Genesis begins with creation. We learn of Adam and Eve and then follow the lives of their descendants to Noah. We're told that humans were sinful, and Yahweh[4] found it necessary to destroy all humans except for Noah's family. After surviving the flood in his ark, we follow Noah's descendants to Abraham. Abraham is pictured as having lived in Ur, a city in Mesopotamia (the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers).[5] He then moves to Canaan at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Still in Genesis, we find that some of his descendants move on to Egypt. The book ends with this verse about Abraham's great grandson, Joseph: "So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." (Genesis 50: 26) Who wrote this story? When? Who wrote the other four books with which the Bible begins--Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy? Together these books are the Torah. They are also called the Pentateuch.

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[3] We will use BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) instead of B.C. and A.D. BCE and CE are less closely associated with Christianity and are increasingly used by historians. Dating is the same.

[4] *Yahweh* is the accepted English language spelling for the name of the Israelite God. This Biblical name written in Hebrew corresponds to *YHWH*. There were no symbols or letters for vowels in old Hebrew writing, but biblical scholars and linguists believe that *Yahweh* would be the way the name was pronounced. *YHWH* appeared more than 6000 times in the Old Testament as it was written in Hebrew. The word *Jehovah* comes from the late Middle Ages in the time of Pope Leo X, c.1518. *Jehovah* is a Latin transliteration of the four Hebrew letters with vowels from *Adonai*, the Hebrew word for Lord. Thus, *Jehovah* is a mixture of consonants from one Hebrew word and the vowel-sounds from another. This hybrid word passed from Latin into English and other European languages causing some confusion in pronunciation. "J" in English is not pronounced like the Latin "J." In Latin, "J" sounds like an English "Y" at the beginning of a word such as *yet*. And Latin "v" sounds like an English "w." So, *Jehovah* was meant to be pronounced "yeh-o-weh"--that is, much like *Yahweh*, but it didn't come out that way in English. In America, *Jehovah* was used extensively in the American Standard Version (1901-1950s) and in many Christian hymns. Many Americans came to accept *Jehovah* as the name of the Jewish/Christian God. But, *Jehovah* was used only a few times in the King James Version of the Bible, and not at all in the Revised Standard Version (1951), nor in the later editions. These Bible versions substitute LORD for the Hebrew YHWH (*Yahweh*). Except for Bible quotations, in these lessons we use the historic Yahweh, not LORD.

An old traditional view has been that Moses was the author. He has been given credit. In some Bibles each of these books still is called a "Book of Moses." Is this idea correct? Moses's authorship has been questioned for at least a thousand years, and it's not difficult to see why. Among many problems, how would Moses have recorded his own death? The author of Deuteronomy says, "So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD, and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Bethpeor; but no man knows the place of his burial to this day." (Deuteronomy 34: 5-6) When is "to this day"? This phrase seems to point to an author living long after the time of Moses when no one of the author's time knows where the burial site would be.

About 200 years ago biblical scholars systematically began trying to get beyond folkwisdom to answer these and other questions regarding authorship of the Old Testament books. German researchers led the way. In the 1800s they began to closely examine writing styles, word usage, and story fragments in the biblical literature. Using these and other kinds of textual analysis they determined that Genesis and the rest of the Torah were complex documents that had been written by more than one person long after the period in which Moses would have lived.

Also in the 1800s ancient Middle Eastern languages were being deciphered.[6] Scholars found that stories much like those in the Bible were also in older literature from neighboring societies. The flood story is one of these. A similar account is found in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* that was written in cuneiform a thousand years before the Israelites had a writing system.

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[5] This is in present day Iraq.

[6] In the 1820s Champollion, a French scholar began to successfully decipher Egyptian hieroglyphs with the help of the Rosetta Stone. In the 1850s Grotefend, a German professor, successfully began the process of deciphering languages written in cuneiform. Neither hieroglyphics nor cuneiform writing had been used for almost 2000 years. Scholars discovered that there were languages older than Hebrew.

During the 1900s, large numbers of additional ancient manuscripts were uncovered. The Dead Sea Scrolls are the most famous, but there were other significant finds as well. The Nag Hammadi discoveries in Egypt are particularly significant. These 1800-year-old Gnostic Christian documents include Old Testament stories very different from what one finds in the Bible. "...the *Testimony of Truth*, for example, tells the story of the Garden of Eden from the viewpoint of the serpent." (Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, p. xvi)

Finally, over the last 50 years anthropologists and other social scientists began intensive study of the nature of oral history--what tends to be remembered and what cannot be remembered accurately. And, archaeologists have uncovered massive amounts of new evidence that call into question previous understandings of how the Hebrew Bible originated. These archaeological finds and their significance are summarized in books such as *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts* by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman and *The View from Nebo* by Amy Dockser Marcus.

In the lessons that follow, students will learn the characteristics of oral history out of which much of the Old Testament arose. They'll find that, once in writing, the biblical scrolls were repeatedly rewritten to reflect the Israelites' evolving understanding of their God, Yahweh. Because of this rewriting, all of the books of the Hebrew Bible reflect the religious beliefs of Jews living in the Roman Empire at about the time of Jesus. The books of the Hebrew Bible did not become "unchangeable" until after the beginning of the Christian era.[7]

As they study this present-day biblical scholarship concerning the Hebrew Bible, some Jewish and Christian students may feel that their religious faith is being challenged. We would note that, for Jews and Christians, God has communicated with many people over thousands of years. This historical study is an attempt to determine when these people lived and the circumstances of their times. The likelihood of Divine Inspiration for the Bible's contents is not being questioned and is not what is being studied.

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[7] The Old Testament of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian Churches includes a variety of books that are not found in the Jewish Bible.

In a public school classroom it is hard to understand how one could constitutionally study this religious book and ignore what biblical experts have to say about it. No student's faith is being questioned in this presentation, however.

The thirteen lessons that make up the unit are listed below. Note that each lesson/chapter is only a few pages long. Note also that chapters are coordinated with rounded off dates. This organization facilitates study, timeline construction and using standard methods of internalizing material (memorizing). Quite obviously it has shortcomings. Nonetheless, based upon our many years of teaching we believe the advantages for beginning a study as we have far outweigh the discomfort of teachers and others who are farther along in their study of biblical history.

History of the Bible--Chapter Lessons

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Chapter Two **Dating Bible Stories and Oral Tradition**
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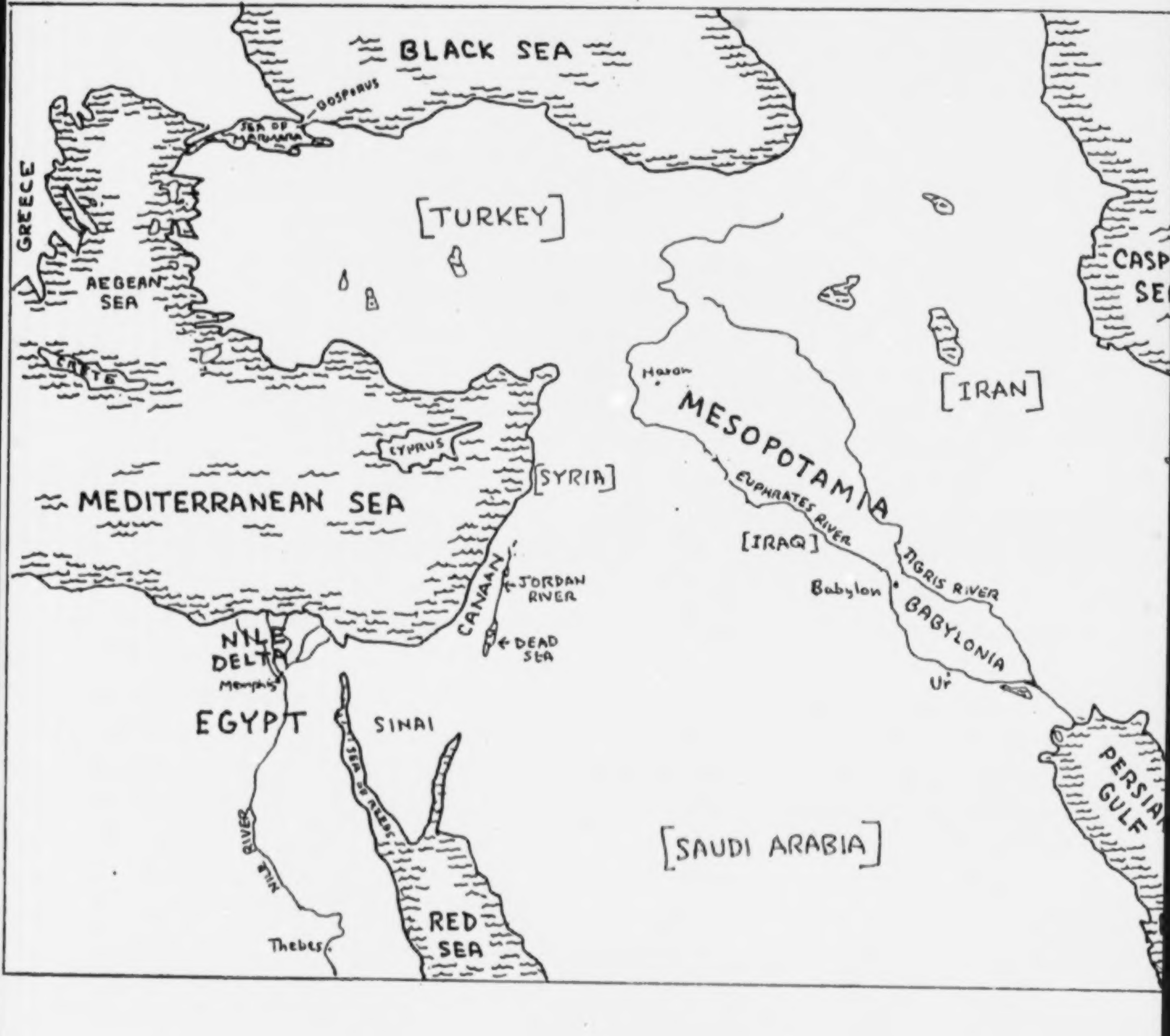
The Middle East



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Chapter One

The Geographic World of the Bible

Bible Locations. The Hebrew Bible, the Christian Old Testament, is a collection of writings that originated in the Middle East.[1] The Bible writings may have begun more than 800 years before Jesus was born, although no book of the Bible in any form known today is this old. However, many of the stories are apparently from early times, passed from generation to generation through oral tradition. In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, there are references to many parts of the Middle East including cities in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Canaan. In this chapter we will outline the geographic setting within which the Bible stories take place.

The Middle East. The Middle East is where Africa, Asia and Europe come together. It includes the modern lands of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and others. Middle Eastern geographic terms that will be used in these lessons include Mesopotamia, Canaan, the Levant, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent. The Aegean Sea Area, the Black Sea and the bodies of water that connect them form the northern border of the Middle East. These also are relevant.

Mesopotamia is the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. These rivers flow south from the mountains of Turkey through Iraq. Today they meet in southern Iraq and together flow into the Persian Gulf. The first cities--such as the city of Ur that the Bible associates with Abraham[2] --were located at the southern end of Mesopotamia by the Persian Gulf. Irrigated agriculture made their existence possible. Digging ditches to water fields on the flat lands between the large rivers was relatively simple. No complex technology was needed.

Canaan is an ancient name for the coastal plains, mountains and hill areas east of the Mediterranean Sea. Another name for this area is *the Levant.* Both terms will be used in these lessons. Today this area is divided among the lands of Lebanon, Israel and Palestine. Southern Canaan extended east across the coastal plain through hilly country to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. The Israelites--who later became known as the Jews and developed the Bible--lived in this southern, rugged Canaanite (or Levant) hill country.

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[1] We use the terms "Hebrew Bible" and "Old Testament" interchangeably.

[2] Genesis 11: 31

Today *Egypt* is a large nation, but historically Egypt meant the narrow strip of valley land along both sides of the Nile River in addition to the broad Nile River Delta. Its first cities--which developed somewhat later than those in Mesopotamia--were also based upon irrigated farming. The Nile River Delta includes many small outlet rivers through which the Nile River flows into the Mediterranean Sea. As in Mesopotamia, irrigation along the river and in the Delta involved much labor, but the methods used in the early years were not complex.

The *Fertile Crescent* includes all three of these areas. It is the strip of herding and agricultural land that arches around the southern Middle Eastern Deserts. It begins at the northern end of the Persian Gulf, extends through Mesopotamia into Turkey. From there the Fertile Crescent loops southwest through Canaan and into the Nile River Delta. The lands of Canaan were often not as productive as the easily irrigated lands of the ends of the Fertile Crescent--Mesopotamia and Egypt's Nile Valley and Delta. This was because Canaan depended mostly on rainfall which could be very limited. Many of Canaan's people herded sheep and goats, and they had olive trees and vineyards that thrived in the semi-arid climate. In addition, some grain could be grown in valley areas. During times of extended drought, peoples in Canaan sometimes had to move elsewhere, often south along the Mediterranean coast to the Egyptian borderlands. Genesis has an account of Abraham's descendants going to Egypt during such a time. (Genesis 42:1-3) When they made this journey they passed through the northern-most part of the Sinai Peninsula. The Sinai Peninsula lies between Canaan and Egypt. According to the Bible, Moses and his Israelite followers traveled through the Sinai Peninsula when they fled from Egypt on their way to Canaan. According to Biblical tradition, Moses received the Ten Commandments while on a mountain in the Sinai Peninsula.

The *Aegean Sea* is that extension of the Mediterranean Sea north of the Island of Crete that connects with the Black Sea through narrow straits and the Sea of Marmara. It's bounded by Greece on the west and north, and by Turkey to the East. The Aegean peoples along the coasts and those on the many Aegean islands played an important role in the formation of the Old Testament. During troubled times--sometimes as the result of massive earthquakes--they moved southward along the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and established cities along the Canaanite coast. The Philistines--who figure prominently in several Bible stories--was one of these groups that came south from the Aegean Area.

The first Middle Eastern Cities. By *cities* historians and social scientists usually mean urban centers that have at least 10,000 people and the family "bread-winners" have specialized occupations other than farming.

The first cities in the world were in the Middle East, and the first ones in the Middle East developed in southern Mesopotamia about 3500 BCE. By 3000 BCE there also were cities in Egypt. By 2500 BCE there was one on the Island of Crete and another in central Turkey. By 1500 BCE cities existed along Aegean coasts, and they also dotted the shore of Canaan.

Life in these first cities was quite different from how humans had lived previously. Before cities, families in villages and towns generally secured their own food. Men and women hunted, gathered wild food, farmed and fished in some combination. They built their own homes and made their own clothes. They manufactured their cooking utensils and the tools used for daily tasks. As towns grew into cities, work progressively became more specialized. At length, in cities there were full-time potters, metal workers and shop keepers. There were merchants, bureaucrats, priests and soldiers. In this situation the basic social equality of the village was replaced by a hierarchy of social ranks.

Rulers, priests and military leaders were at the top of the social class structure in the first city-states. Before cities, chiefs had lived much like everyone else. They exhibited their power through relatively simple authority symbols and used face-to-face methods of persuasion. These ago-old ways became inadequate when a leader--now often called a king--had more than 10,000 people to deal with. Authority symbols became very large. Kings built huge palaces, monuments and administrative buildings that were visible to everyone. Often they were on hilltops. New methods of record-keeping also were needed. The unaided human memory was no longer adequate. People couldn't keep track of all of the commercial exchanges, taxes, and the like using just their memories. In the Middle East this need for keeping track of things helped produce writing. Pictographs came first. A pictograph is a simple, very basic image that represents a word or idea. From pictographs three major writing systems developed before 1500 BCE. They were all in the Middle East, and they are called Cuneiform, Hieroglyphics and Linear A.

Cuneiform, the first writing system to emerge from pictographs, arose in Mesopotamia. It was used for many languages there and in Turkey. Cuneiform consisted of combinations of wedge-shaped marks made in wet clay with a triangle-pointed stick. Hieroglyphics developed in Egypt, and Linear A evolved on the Island of Crete. Peoples in centrally located Canaan relied on all three of these scripts. In all of them a specific symbol stood for a whole word. As a consequence, to read and write, a scribe needed to know at least several hundred symbols as is true of Chinese today. Being a scribe was a full-time, high status occupation.

The scribes often were priests, and these priests usually were closely associated with the king. In Egypt the king, or pharaoh, was himself considered a god. In Mesopotamia each city had a chief god whose shrine was on top of the city's ziggurat, a huge mud-brick, multi-stage, tower-like structure.[3] Kings were not themselves gods while they ruled, but kings and gods were in close communication. Effective kings often were elevated to god-status after their death. In Canaan the kings also were thought to have direct contact with the gods. And as in Mesopotamia, gods were worshiped in high places, but ziggurats were not built.

Bureaucracies did not exist in village and town cultures. A dozen or so people may have waited upon the chief, served as his aides and were his body-guards. In time of war all able-bodied men and boys came together and fought (mostly in their own individual ways). In city cultures there were large professional armies and many other governmental workers. An army was necessary to keep citizens in line as well as to repel enemies--or to attack them and, with victory, secure tribute from them. Through these means kings and the upper class people associated with them grew very wealthy. The lives of the herders, farmers and fishermen--who fed the king, his bureaucracy and upper-class city-dwellers--did not greatly improve, however. Neither did that of common city laborers.

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[3] The Tower of Babel story in Genesis (11: 1-9) apparently relates to Babylon's ziggurat which was partly destroyed somewhat before the Babylonian Captivity period. Zigguarats are described in Chapter Six. *Babel* is a play on two similar Hebrew words--one refers to the city of Babylon and the other means "to confuse." ("Babel, Tower of." *Encarta Encyclopedia.*)

Earthquakes and Floods. Both earthquakes and floods have influenced some of the stories found in the Bible, and we'll consider each individually.

The earth has a molten interior with a relatively thin hard "crust." This crust is cracked into large and small pieces called tectonic plates which move very slowly over the earth's molten interior. As they shift, tension builds in the surface rocks along these fault lines until earthquakes occur. The central part of the Middle East is one place on earth where several pieces of the earth's crust meet and shift positions. As a result, there are reoccurring and violent earthquakes in the Aegean, Turkish and surrounding areas. As we shall see in Chapter 3, a series of severe earthquakes probably helped destroy the first cities in the Aegean Sea area as well as in western Turkey and the Levant.

In addition, the Jordan River valley--which is about 1000 feet below sea level--has been caused by the tectonic plates pulling apart. It is a huge "gash" in the earth's surface that figures prominently in the Hebrew Bible narrative. For instance, in the Exodus story Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt, and he circles east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan River (which flows south from the mountains in Lebanon into the Sea). He climbs Mt. Nebo so that he can look across the Jordan River valley and see Canaan--the Promised Land--on the other side. Other Biblical stories such as the disappearance of Sodom and Gomorrah may have their basis in destruction associated with the devastating earthquakes that are found along the earth's fault lines.

The story of Noah and the "world-wide" flood is one of the best known of the Old Testament stories, and it almost certainly relates in part to the unpredictable and devastating floods that occurred in Mesopotamia. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers have their headwaters in the mountains of eastern Turkey. When the rain or snow is particularly heavy, these rivers flood the plains. And for the peoples living there, their whole world would have been flooded.

An additional and very dramatic flooding occurrence has been recently discovered by scientists. They have found that the Black Sea dramatically expanded within a year's time about 5,600 BCE. The last advance of the last ice age was coming to an end. As glaciers melted, ocean levels--including the Mediterranean Sea and Sea of Marmara--rose several hundred feet. The water finally went over the land barrier that separated the Sea of Marmara from the Black Sea. Once this natural dam was breached, small trickles of water rapidly became gigantic waterfalls.[4] Sea water from the Mediterranean gushed through into the old, smaller Black Sea that was 500 feet lower. The rising waters extended the Black Sea outward over the old coastlines at the rate of about a mile a day. Peoples living along its shore lines had to quickly flee to higher areas. This extremely rapid, dramatic Black Sea flooding probably continued for about a year.

Although this permanent flooding occurred about 2,000 years before writing was invented, a rapid Black Sea expansion of this size--when reinforced by Tigris or Euphrates river floods--may account for the stories found in many Mesopotamian cultures. At least William Ryan and Walter Pitman, the authors of *Noah's Flood* think so.[5]

The Sumerians who first wrote about a "world-wide" flood lived in southern Mesopotamia by the Persian Gulf. But, their ancestors had come from the north. Ryan and Pitman think that it's likely these ancestors had lived along the southern shore of the old Black Sea before the flood. The flood story was a part of their oral heritage as they moved south. And, the river floods in their new homeland kept the ancient story alive. In oral traditions, similar events merge together after a couple of generations. They are remembered as a single event. This and other aspects of oral tradition will be studied in the next chapter.

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[4] The channel into the Black Sea that was carved out is called the Bosporus.

[5] *Noah's Flood: the New Scientific Discoveries About the Event that Changed History* was published in 1998. (NY: Simon & Schuster) See pages 232-237 for Ryan and Pitman's description of the flooding sea water entering the Black Sea basin. Similar accounts now can be found in many sources including the *National Geographic*, May, 2001, pp. 52-69, and its Television Special (2001) which was on PBS-TV and is available on videotape. The *National Geographic*'s flood date is 5500 BCE.

Chapter Two

Dating Bible Stories and Oral Tradition

The Bible and Calendar dating. The dating used for Hebrew Bible history is that of our common era calendar. It is based on the Christian calendar that was first devised in 525 CE, which was the year that the Roman Church authority believed was 525 years after the birth of Jesus. After this date the church calendar gradually became widely used in Christian lands. Events were given dates in "A.D." years (Anno Domini--in the year of the Lord) and in "B.C." years (Before Christ). The world-wide domination and trade by European nations after 1500 CE (as well as that of the U. S. later) spread the use of this Christian-based calendar. Peoples around the world used it even though the original Christian references were irrelevant or disrespectful of their own religions.

To separate the calendar from specific Christian references, "CE" (our Common Era) and "BCE" (Before the Common Era) are used in much scholarly work today, and are used in these pages. "BCE" years are exactly the same as "B.C." years. "CE" years are exactly the same as "A.D." years. In BCE times the numbers become smaller as one comes toward the present--until 1 BCE is reached. The next year is 1 CE, and the numbers then increase in size until we reach the present day a little over 2,000 years later. (Note that there is no zero year in the system.)

Dating Bible Books. Dating Old Testament stories of events that are said to have occurred before 1000 BCE is very difficult.

Chronologies--historical sequences--did exist in Egypt (beginning about 3000 BCE) and in Mesopotamia (beginning about 2300 BCE). ("Chronology." Encarta Encyclopedia) However, Israelites--the people of the Bible who eventually became Jews--are not mentioned in any cuneiform literature until well after 1000 BCE. No hieroglyphic records from before 1000 BCE exist either (except for a note that Israelites were a group that the Pharaoh defeated during a campaign in Canaan about 1200 BCE). The Bible itself is the only account of the Israelites before 1000 BCE, and many people have tried to use it as a history text for these ancient times.

The Bible has no calendar dates, but it does have father-to-son genealogies that begin with Adam and Eve. These genealogies continue to Abraham. From Abraham's time on, Bible information can be used to roughly count backwards from Solomon. (The Bible says Moses left Egypt 480 years before Solomon built the Jerusalem temple. And, the Israelites went to Egypt 430 years before this.)[1]

Combining age estimates based upon biblical genealogies with the Bible-stated time-spans from Abraham to Solomon led pre-modern Western religious scholars into thinking that the earth is very young.

In the 1600s Archbishop James Ussher (of the British Anglican Church) arrived at the date of 4004 BCE for God's creation of the earth. This date became a marginal note in many editions of the King James Version of the Bible, and it was widely accepted by many Christians. In the same era Jewish scholars arrived at a somewhat similar date. They determined that God had created the world in 3761 BCE, and the Jewish calendar counts forward from that time. However, these dates are dramatically different from what scientists say is the case. Today, few Jews or Christians accept the idea that the earth came into existence only 6,000, 10,000 or 100,000 year ago. Those who do are called "new earth creationists."[2]

If the Bible cannot tell us when the world was created, when does it become historical? At the time of Noah? ...the time of Abraham? ...of Moses? ...of David and Solomon in the 900s BCE? ...only later when two Hebrew-speaking nations (Israel and Judah) are known from non-biblical sources to have existed? When trying to answer these questions, biblical scholars today have many more sources to work with than were available 400 years ago.

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[1] Standard reference books such as encyclopedias place Solomon's reign in the middle 900s BCE. 1 Kings 6:1 says that Moses left Egypt 480 years before Solomon started building the first temple in Jerusalem. Exodus 12:40 says the Israelites went to Egypt 430 years before the Exodus began. Adding the figures together means that Abraham would have lived well before 1800 BCE. If one considers the extremely long lifespans the Bible attributes to Abraham's heirs, one ends with a date earlier than that.

[2] Most creationists are "old earth creationists." They generally accept scientific dating and reconcile it with their religious beliefs in a variety of ways. For example, day-age creationists may believe that each of the "days" in the Genesis account of creation--equals a huge span of time. And, there are a variety of other ways by which Jews and Christians fit their Bible beliefs with their scientific knowledge.

Egyptian and Mesopotamian writing has been deciphered, and Bible stories can be compared with those of other peoples. Archaeology exists. Archeologists have excavated numerous Old Testament sites in Canaan and surrounding areas. They can date artifacts by using known rates of radio-active decay as well as by other means. As a consequence of these and multiple other kinds of investigations, historians' understandings of Bible stories have changed a great deal in the last hundred years or so.

The story of Abraham and when he is said to have lived provides an example.

Dating back from Solomon, Abraham would seemed to have lived no later than 1800 BCE. But, modern researchers know that this date cannot be accurate for several reasons. Here are three major ones:

First, according to Genesis 11:31, "Terah took Abram[3] his son..., his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan...." The writer refers to "Ur of the Chaldeans" ("Chaldees" in the King James Version). However, Chaldeans were members of a tribe that didn't come into Babylonia until about 1000 BCE and even then they didn't stay long. In the 900s BCE the Assyrians drove them out. They didn't come back into Babylonia again until the Assyrians weakened in the 600s BCE. Only then were the Chaldeans able establish a strong kingdom in Mesopotamia.[4]

Second, Genesis 26:1 talks about a famine during the time of Abraham. During this famine his son, Isaac went to "Abimelech king of the Philistines." There were no Philistines in Canaan in 1800 BCE. The Philistines were migrants, probably coming from the Aegean Sea area. The first Philistine villages along the Canaan coast were built sometime after 1200 BCE, and they did not have strong cities with kings until about 700 BCE. (Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 37)

Third, Genesis 37:25 talks about Abraham's grandchildren--Joseph and his brothers. "Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt." Camels were wild animals in 1800 BCE. They had not yet been tamed. Trading networks using camel caravans didn't exist much before 1000 BCE. Further, "gum, balm and myrrh" were products from Arabia. Traders would not have gone through Canaan "on their way to carry it down to Egypt." Rather, these products went through Canaan on their way north to Assyria (in modern Turkey) along routes established after 800 BCE.

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[3] Terah was Abraham's father. Yahweh changed Abram's name to Abraham later in his life.

[4] Shortly after 600 BCE they defeated Judah and took leaders as captives back to their capital. This is the Babylonian Captivity period of the 500s BCE which is described in Chapter Six.

All of these historical facts suggest that the people writing about Abraham were composing their account well after 1000 BCE. Maybe Abraham was a real person who lived at a remote time in the past. However, his world as described in the Bible is not one that existed in the 1800s BCE. It is much more like the Middle Eastern world of 800 BCE or later.

But, don't these objections relate to incidental details? What difference does it make if the Mesopotamian city of Ur was controlled by someone else in 1800 BCE? Aren't details about camels, trading routes and the goods transported almost irrelevant? Suppose that Isaac did go to some other king. What difference does all of this make in regard to our basic understanding of Abraham? Couldn't his essential life-story be quite accurate? Couldn't basic facts about Abraham and his offspring be accurately memorized and transmitted from generation to generation until they were written down--whenever this was?

Experts in oral history doubt it. Jan Vansina, author of *Oral Tradition as History,* says that people in non-literate societies--such as the Israelites before 1000 BCE--basically have two kinds of history. There are the happenings of the recent past and, secondly, the group's mythical past. Both may be very detailed, but they are quite different.

By *recent past* Vansina means the last few generations. Even without writing, data for a generation or two often is extensive, and the events that are described probably happened in one way or another. But, eye-witness accounts themselves often are contradictory, and whatever validity recent oral history may have quickly "tapers off as one moves back through time." Vansina says that preliterate people have no way of keeping track of long time periods, and myths take over. These include accounts of a group's origins, movements and great events. Quite likely they too are very elaborate, but they are not "history" in any modern sense.

A group's mythical history likely includes snippets of real happenings from various ages, but they are mixed together. They also are jumbled with borrowings from other cultures, "speculation by local sages," and what people think should have happened. All these elements merge into stories that usually center around a few cultural heroes. Frequently, a particular leader is said to have done things that actually happened over generations, if they ever happened at all.

These heroic figures may not even have been actual people. A "hero" may have begun as one of the group's gods or spirits who gradually became humanized through generations of story-telling. Or, cultural values such as "Truth" or "Justice" may have taken on human form as stories were told and retold.

If a happening is to be remembered, the cultural story-teller must make his account interesting, relevant to his listeners and relate it to existing mythical themes. In such ways a people without writing gradually creates a "history" for itself. It is a fluid account that gradually changes from generation to generation. In summary, Vansina says:

> Collective memory simplifies by fusing analogous personalities or situations into one....This process continues to the point that most accounts are lost or fused into each other beyond recognition. (p. 21)

From a historian's perspective, therefore, the existence of various individuals and peoples described in the Bible who are said to have lived before King David is open to question. Consider a Bible story about Moses:

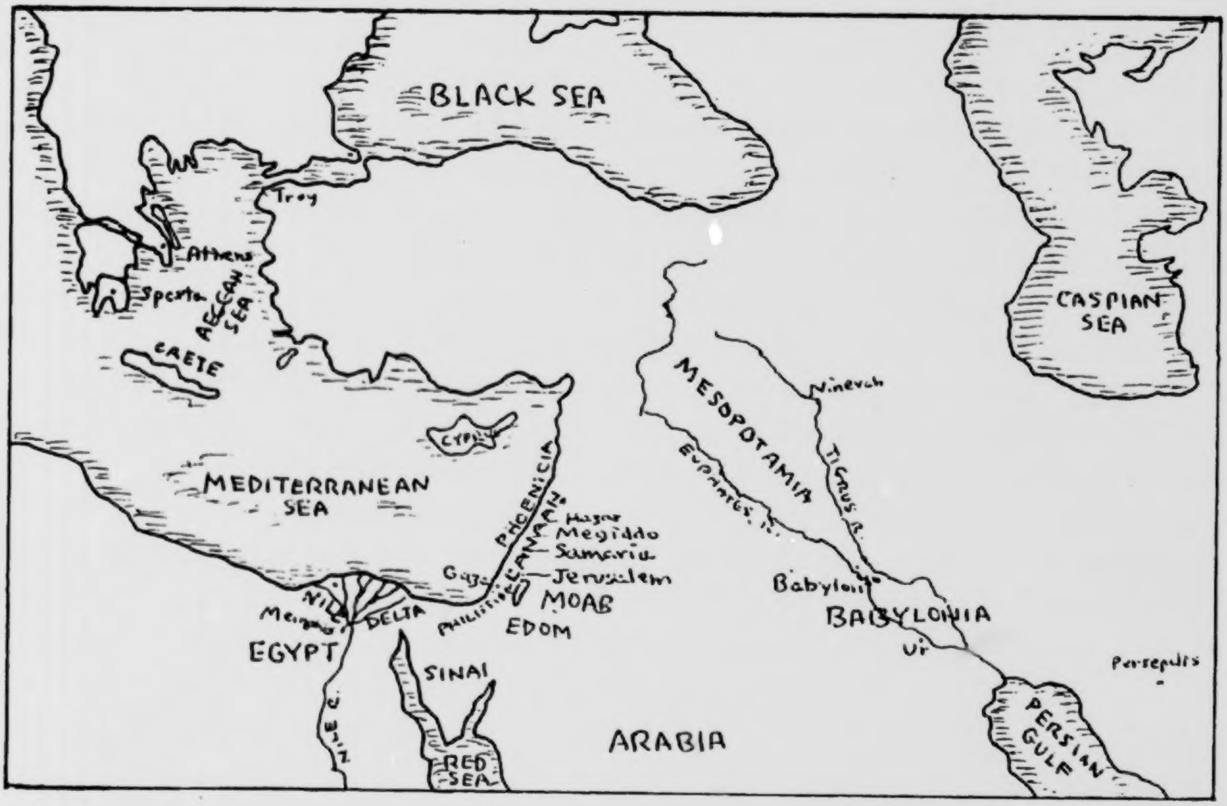
According to Exodus 1:7 "...the descendants of Israel [in Egypt] were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong; so that the land was filled with them." Then these thousands of people left Egypt in dramatic circumstances.

> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen....Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. So Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its wonted flow when morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled into it, and the LORD routed

> the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not so much as one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right and on their left. (Exodus 14: 21-30)

Despite the impact such events would have had for Egyptian leaders, none of the extensive Egyptian records before 1000 BCE say anything about large numbers of Israelites or proto-Israelites living in Egypt or being among their slaves--let alone leaving in the way that the Bible authors describe, killing all of the Pharaoh's horses and horsemen that were pursuing them.

If the world of the Israelites before 1000 was not as it is pictured in the Bible, what was it like? In the next chapter we will look at this world and try to gain a mental picture of the life of the Israelites as seen by archaeologists and other scholars.



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Chapter Three

The Israelites Before 1000 BCE

Background on the Israelite Tribes. When does the Old Testament become reliable from a historical standpoint? Except for the information in the Bible, there is no evidence that the Israelites existed as a separate culture much before 1200 BCE. Before 1200 BCE several dozen ancient, Bronze-Age cities existed in the central Middle East. They had begun developing centuries earlier, and they dotted the coasts of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean Seas.[1] Then, between 1250 and 1175 BCE, the cities in Canaan and the Aegean Sea area were destroyed. The hill-town where Jerusalem later would stand was no exception. It too was reduced to rubble. Writing in the Middle East disappeared except in Egypt and Mesopotamia. People in Canaan and surrounding areas went back to living in small agricultural villages. Such times may be called a "Dark Age."

Almost certainly environmental factors played a part in bringing on this Canaanite (and Aegean) Dark Age.

The central part of the Middle East is dependent upon rain for pastures and crops. During the 1200s BCE there is evidence of severe and long-enduring dry spells.[2] Crops and pastures apparently failed, and perhaps city people couldn't be adequately fed. And, drought in areas to the north and east may have triggered movements of people into the Greece, Turkey and Canaan area creating a "domino effect." One group replacing another.

Also, the area is on multiple major fault lines that produce extended times of severe earthquakes. This was one such period. Some cities were destroyed by them. Flash floods associated with the quakes may have destroyed others along the coasts.

Moreover, warfare was changing in 1200 BCE. Around 1200 BCE iron was replacing bronze for making tools and the weapons of war in the Middle

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[1] The cities in Egypt and Mesopotamia at the two ends of the Fertile Crescent were much older.

[2] This has been determined by tree ring data and desperate communications among rulers. In one, the Hittite king requested grain from a Canaanite king saying it was a matter of life and death. (Stiebing, p. 19)

East. Iron was much more abundant that the copper and tin out of which bronze was made. Once the process of making iron was mastered, masses of common soldiers could be effectively armed for the first time, and the overall destructiveness of warfare increased.[3]

The ruling order in the existing cities, weakened by environmental factors, broke down when faced by invaders using iron weapons. Rulers were overcome or fled.

The ancient cities probably were quite fragile anyway. Perhaps the residents were just adequately fed when times were good. As populations increased and hard times came, no backup system for feeding them seems to have existed.[4] Another possibility may relate to people's lack of loyalty to their states. There was great social inequality in these early Bronze-Age cities. As social control broke down, common people may have revolted. Farmers and others who had supplied the city may have stopped doing so. Commoners may have moved away, thus becoming part of the mass migrations. Then, epidemic disease came. It almost always is a secondary factor when people are uprooted and malnourished.[5]

The First Israelites. Israelite culture first becomes recognizable at the beginning of the Canaanite Dark Age. The first evidence of Israelites as a distinct group comes from a stone monument erected by the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah in 1207 BCE. After a military campaign in Canaan, he brags about destroying the Israelites along with other peoples of the area.

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[3] Bronze age warfare had been quite different. Before 1200 BCE a city was defended by a small number of elite troops who rode in chariots. Each chariot contained two warriors--a driver and a warrior with his bronze weapons. Iron in natural forms-- meteorites and clumps of bog iron--had been known for centuries. But, iron melts at much higher temperatures than copper and tin from which bronze is made. And even then, the impurities in iron must be removed through a repeated process of heating and hammering. These difficulties delayed its widespread use.

[4] Back-up food systems did exist in Egypt, which might be one reason for its survival. Also, its cities were located along the Nile rather than along the more easily attacked sea coasts. Also this civilization was much older than the relatively new city-states that were destroyed.

[5] The section is based upon a variety of standard sources. For information on earthquakes during the time period see Stiebing, William H., "When Civilization Collapsed: Death of the Bronze Age," *Archaeology Odyssey*, Sept./October, 2001, pp. 18-29. For the effects of disease during the time period, consult William McNeill, Chapter Two, "Breakthrough to History," in *Plagues and Peoples*. 1976 pp. 40-77. For an overview, see Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 1997, W. W. Norton & Co.

According to Finkelstein and Silberman, the Israelites were not some preexisting culture that came from somewhere else and invaded the land. Rather, they were inhabitants of Canaan who--during the Dark Age--gradually developed a distinctive identity. They came together as a people in the rugged hill country that extends from the Canaanite coastal plain east to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. (*The Bible Unearthed*, p. 98)
In these hills a "dramatic social transformation" took place beginning about 1200 BCE in which an existing Canaanite population evolved into Israelites.

> There was no sign of violent invasion or even the infiltration of a clearly defined ethnic group. Instead, it seemed to be a revolution in lifestyle. In the formerly sparsely populated highlands...far from the Canaanite cities that were in the process of collapse and disintegration, about [250] hilltop communities suddenly sprang up. Here were the first Israelites. (Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 107)

These were tiny, self-sufficient villages, each of which probably had no more than about 100-150 people, including the children. By 1000 BCE perhaps 250 of these Israelite villages existed. Including the nomadic herders, the combined population of the Israelites probably was not more than 45,000 people.

They were located in very marginal lands, close to desert areas--on hilltops, steep ridges and in narrow valleys. There was pasture land for flocks of sheep and goats, and just enough rain to grow some grain. Water came from springs and natural rainfall that the villagers saved by routing it into plastered cisterns that they dug into the rocks.

These first Israelites lived simple, self-contained lives. Their small houses were built of rough stones gathered from nearby areas. They stored grain in stone-lined pits dug into the ground. Their simple pots had little or no decoration. They wore almost no jewelry and had few luxury items.

Their stone houses were organized in an oval pattern, similar to the way nomads pitch their tents so that their animals can be kept in a protected area at night. The villages had:

> no public buildings, palaces, storehouses, or temples. Signs of any sophisticated kind of record keeping, such as writing, seals, and seal impressions, are almost completely absent. (Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 109)

There is one bit of evidence from the time period that enables us to know something about their religious beliefs. Unlike earlier settlements in the area, archaeologists have found no pig bones. Hogs apparently were not raised or eaten. This ban on pork:

> ...cannot be explained by environmental or economic reasons alone. It may...be the only clue that we have of a specific, shared identity among the highland villagers west of the Jordan. Perhaps the proto-Israelites stopped eating pork merely because peoples--their adversaries--did eat it, and they had begun to see themselves as different. Distinctive culinary practices and dietary customs are two of the ways in which ethnic boundaries are formed. [proto-Israelites means that these villagers were in the process of becoming the culture that later became clearly Israelite in nature.] (Finkelstein and Silberman, pp. 119-20.)

Finally, these first Israelites were peaceful people.

> [Their] villages were not fortified. Either the inhabitants felt secure in their remote settlements and did not need to invest in defenses or they did not have the means or proper organization to undertake such work. No weapons, such as swords or lances, were uncovered--although such finds are typical of the cities in the lowlands. Nor were there signs of burning or sudden destruction that might indicate a violent attack. (Finkelstein and Silberman, pp. 109-10)

According to Finkelstein and Silberman, the nomadic herders of the Canaanite hills gradually settled down and became "Israelites" because of the destruction of the coastal Canaanite cities.

> ,...the existence of large populations of pastoral nomads in the highlands and desert fringes was possible only as long as the Canaanite city-states and villages could produce an adequate grain surplus to trade. This was the situation during the three centuries of Egyptian rule over Canaan [from about 1500 to 1200 BCE]. But when that political system collapsed in the twelfth century BCE [the 1100s], its economic networks ceased functioning. It is reasonable to assume that the villagers of [lowland] Canaan were forced to concentrate on local subsistence and no longer produced a significant surplus of grain....Thus the highland and desert-fringe pastoralists had to adapt to the new conditions and produce their own grain. Flocks would then have to be reduced as the period of migrations grew shorter, and with more and more effort invested in agriculture, a permanent shift to [village life] occurred (p. 118.)[6]

In addition, it is reasonable to assume that refugees from the destroyed coastal cities and supporting villages would have "headed for the hills."

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[6] This shifting between nomadic and settled life--and sometimes back again depending upon economic conditions--is a reoccurring theme in Middle Eastern history. It is a mistake to think that once nomads settle down they necessarily will stay settled forever thereafter.

They were only a couple of days' walk from the destroyed coastal cities. Fleeing to safer areas would have been relatively easy, and such flight is an almost universal human response to wartime or natural destruction.

Canaanite Writing. Just outside of the Israelite area a new way of writing was evolving at this time. Unlike the ancient symbol-word writing of the Bronze-Age civilizations, now there were experiments with having symbols stand for sounds rather than for complete words. This was a way of writing that the Israelites eventually would adopt.

The earliest evidence of sound-symbol writing comes from a turquoise mining area in the Sinai Peninsula and dates from about 1500 BCE. Here archaeologists have found the name of a goddess "spelled out" using pictures to stand for sounds, not for whole words. To use a modern analogy, a simple house-picture might be used for an "H" sound. A pig might stand for a "P" sound--and other pictures for other consonants. These Sinai picture-symbols for consonant sounds were written from right to left--as in present-day Hebrew and Arabic writing.

From this starting point (or one much like it), the Phoenician alphabet evolved which--after 1000 BCE--was adopted by the Israelites.

Summary. The first five books of the Bible--Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy--together are called the Torah by Jews and the Pentateuch by Christians. As written, the Torah--as well as Joshua, Judges and the Samuel books--appear to concern events that happened before 1000 BCE.

Experts such as Finkelstein and Silberman view these accounts as much like the creation stories found in other cultures. Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Noah saving his family from a world-wide flood, Abraham coming to Canaan from Ur, Joseph rising to heights in Egypt, and Moses--hundreds of years later-- leading the Israelites out of Egypt are all in this category.

Jonathan Kirsch says this about Moses:

> All that we can say about the historical Moses is that someone like the man described in the Bible might have lived at some unknowable time and place in the far-distant past, and that his exploits might have been the grain of sand

> around which the pearly accretions of legend and lore slowly built up over the centuries until he became the rich and provocative figure whom we find in the pages of the Bible....Moses came to be used as a narrative device to stitch together the major episodes in the sacred history of Israel. (*Moses: A Life*, 1998, Random House, p. 356)

From a historian's viewpoint, these are sacred stories, and they are deeply meaningful to people who believe the Bible embodies the word of God. However, they cannot be presented as secular history. These are not accounts for which archaeologists or other scholars have found evidence.

If the Israelites were still living in small agricultural villages at 1000 BCE, when did these villages grow into towns? When did a few of these towns become cities--able to support kings and palaces, priests and temples? When did scribes become affordable--people who would borrow the Phoenician alphabet, adapt it to the Hebrew language and write down the ancient religious lore of the people?

These are questions that will be investigated in the following lessons. In them the findings of historians, archaeologists and other scientifically-oriented biblical scholars are relied upon. The authors have tried to include the most recent research by leading biblical scholars, linguists and archaeologists that's widely available. However, these are only "best understandings at the present time." They will change as archaeological work goes on and as historical perspectives are modified.

Chapter Four

Before Israel & Judah --1000 to 900 BCE

According to the Bible, Saul established the first Israelite kingdom. This would have been shortly after 1000 BCE. David seized the kingdom from Saul, the first king, and greatly expanded it through conquest. Solomon, David's son, then turned it into a rich, powerful empire.

This huge transformation--from rural tribal living to glorious statehood--would have taken place between about 1000 and 920 BCE when, according to traditional dating, Solomon died.

This is an extraordinarily rapid recovery from a "Dark Ages" period. Cultural recovery of this magnitude usually takes centuries--as is illustrated by the events in Western Europe after the Roman Empire crumpled.[1] Nonetheless, early archaeological findings seemed to support the biblical story in a general way.

Archaeology began about 100 years ago, and almost immediately researchers began looking for evidence of the kingdoms of David and Solomon. Quite soon they thought they'd found some. In the early 1900s they found the remains of the cities along the Mediterranean coast which had been destroyed. Not having modern dating techniques and using the Bible as their guide, they attributed this destruction to King David in the 900s BCE. (Recall that these cities actually perished between 1250 and 1175 BCE.)

A short time later archaeologists unearthed remains of palaces in three Israelite cities, Megiddo, Hazor and Gezer. Still using the Bible as a guide, they thought they were Solomon's palaces because the Bible authors say, Solomon had them rebuilt. In sum, until about 1950 it appeared as if the Bible stories from about 1000 to 900 BCE were essentially correct. The first monarch, King Saul perhaps was questionable. But, it was believed that David had carved out a significant kingdom that his son, Solomon had made glorious. But nagging questions remained.

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[1] Warrior societies such as the Mongols have been able to change quite rapidly when they conquered an already civilized area. The relatively small number of invaders simply took over the customs of the civilized people they subjugated. The Bible authors describe a conquest of Canaan by Israelite Sinai warriors, but archaeological evidence is lacking. Cities in Canaan had been gone for about 150 years. In this "Dark Age," people in the hill areas between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea gradually evolved into a rather distinctive Hebrew-speaking culture based upon tribal loyalties. One of these tribes was Israel which grew in size, and by the 800s BCE it had developed some towns and a few cities--such as Samaria. Archaeological data indicates that Hebrew-speaking Jerusalem didn't reach city status until the 700s BCE.

If Jerusalem was David's thriving capital, why was no evidence of it found? Why was there no evidence of Solomon's palace or temple to Yahweh? Why was there no mention of David, Solomon or their kingdom in the records of their neighbors? How could this kingdom rise to such heights a century before neighboring kingdoms made similar advances? (*The Bible Unearthed*, pp. 137-142)

In answer, people who use the Bible as a history text for this period point out that a lack of evidence does not mean it doesn't exist. They believe archaeological finds will come with more digging. If they don't, this failure means the evidence was destroyed in later ages. They also note that records from neighboring cultures were not complete. Egypt and Assyria in particular were at low ebbs during the 900s BCE. Finally, they point out that it is possible for a small group of warriors to conquer a civilized area and then quickly rebuild it to conform to their own beliefs.

Most archaeological scholars think differently. They point out that some data should have been found as time passed, but this didn't happen. Instead, the early evidence that seemed to support the Biblical story of David and Solomon itself has crumpled. In The *Bible Unearthed*, Finkelstein and Silberman--both archaeologists--say that "Essentially, archaeology misdated both 'Davidic' and 'Solomonic' remains by a full century." The great building projects that had been attributed to Solomon, for example, have now been dated to the 800s BCE. "The new dates place the appearance of monumental structures, fortifications and other signs of full statehood [in Israel] precisely at the time of their first appearance in the rest of the Levant." (Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 142)

Finkelstein and Silberman say that the biblical accounts of David and Solomon are much like those of heroes in previous centuries. Specifically, they doubt that a united Israelite kingdom ever existed. They see the

David and Solomon Bible stories as "mighty ancestor" accounts that were created in later centuries.

Probably there were Israelite leaders named David and Solomon who lived in the 900s BCE, but their lives would have been very different from how they are pictured in the Bible. Finkelstein and Silberman say:

> ...Israelite settlement in the highlands of Canaan was a gradual, regional phenomenon in which local pastoralist groups [shepherd and herders] began to settle down in the sparsely populated highlands and form self-sufficient village communities....cultivation of olives and grapes began [and the old] self-sufficiency could not be maintained. Villagers who concentrated on orchards and vines would necessarily have to exchange some of their surplus production of wine and olive oil for basic commodities like grain. (p. 130)
>
> [Nonetheless, the] material culture...in the time of David remained simple. The land was overwhelmingly rural--with no trace of written documents, inscriptions, or even signs of the kind of widespread literacy that would be necessary for the functioning of a proper monarchy....the area from Jerusalem to the south--the hub of the future kingdom of Judah--was still very sparsely settled. Jerusalem itself was, at best, no more than a typical highland village. (*The Bible Unearthed*, p. 142)

According to this interpretation, the extremely detailed biblical stories of Saul, David and Solomon can be explained by understanding the nature of oral tradition, as was described in a previous lesson. Accounts of heroes that survive become part of the group's mythical heritage. They become more elaborate and specific as they are told over and over again from generation to generation. Nobody would be deliberately lying. Each storyteller is imagining what they think happened, or what "should have happened." Stated very simply, in the 900s BCE there is no evidence that the Israelites had a written language, and without writing, stories "grow with the telling." (It is easy for people of any historical period to confuse detail with correctness, precision with accuracy--incorrectly assuming that the more detailed an account is, the more likely it is to be true.)

Once stories of David and Solomon were in writing (perhaps a hundred years later) they probably were edited repeatedly as centuries went by. Most Biblical scholars say they didn't reach a final form until well after 500 BCE. In other words, the accounts of David and Solomon that people read in the Bible today were not "finalized" for more than 400 years after these kings were supposed to have lived.

And, more than the lives of Israel's first kings are involved. The view of Yahweh that one receives when reading about Saul, David and Solomon in the Bible reflects the beliefs of Jewish religious leaders after 500 BCE. Their monotheism, or belief in one God for everybody, didn't develop before this. David and Solomon--living in the 900s BCE--would have had religious beliefs quite different from those attributed to them.

In the 900s BCE all Canaanite cultures--including the Hebrews--did have a chief god. The Philistines had Dogon and, later Ba'al. The Ammonites had Milkom. Chemosh was the chief god of the Moabites, and Edomites had Qos. And, the Hebrews had Yahweh. Each god had a consort, a female deity who was his wife or mistress. These female gods were much the same regardless of culture. They even had variations of the same name--Asherah, Ashtoreth or Astarte. Yahweh likely was no exception. During David's time and for several centuries thereafter Hebrews apparently worshiped Asherah and other deities along with Yahweh even in the Jerusalem temple. (Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 142) In short, Hebrew religious ceremonies during this time period also were much like their neighbors.

> Not only was the female consort the same, the various nations used the same cult objects, the same types of incense altars made of stone and clay, the same bronze and clay censers, cult stand and incense burners, the same chalices and goblets and the same bronze and ivory rods adorned with pomegranates. It was easy to take cult vessels of one deity and place them in the service of another one--and this was commonly done.[2]

Each town or trading center likely had its own temple. (Worship of Yahweh was not centralized in Jerusalem for at least another 300 years.) Outside of the towns, shepherds and other rural people worshiped on hill tops or at holy places they made by standing stones on end. Many of these simple stone shrines still exist. Some are single upright stones; others are groupings of stones. Some include benches, altars or basins.[3] This kind of rural worship continued for centuries after David and Solomon.

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[2] (Ephraim Stern, "Pagan Yahwism: The Folk Religion of Ancient Israel," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 2001, p. 23.) Pomegranates were fertility symbols.

[3] One biblical reference relating to this type of worship is found in Genesis 28:22. "This stone that I have set up as a pillar shall be God's house." There are many other Biblical references as well. (Uzi Avner, "Sacred Stones in the Desert," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June, 2001, pp. 30-41.

In summary, Israelite history requires scholars to seek data from outside of the Bible. To be accepted as history, Bible accounts must have outside supporting evidence. None exists for an Israelite "united kingdom" under David and Solomon that existed in the 900s BCE. Jerusalem was only a small rural village. There was no written Hebrew language during the 900s BCE either, and evidence of a temple to Yahweh in Jerusalem hasn't been found.

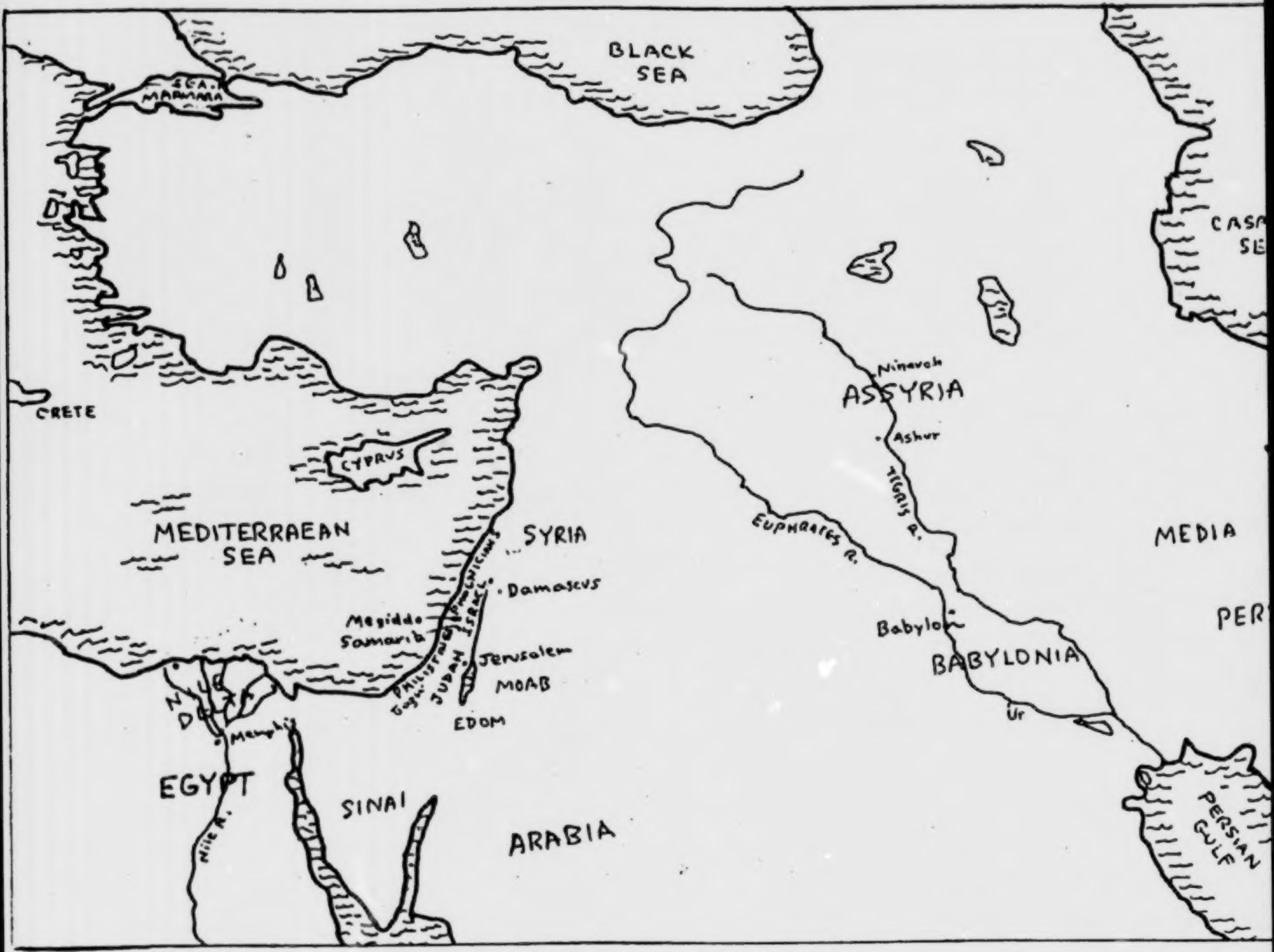
In regard to religion, the ancestors of the Jews did not develop their concept of monotheism until after 500 BCE. In the 900s BCE Israelite beliefs were much like those of surrounding Canaanite groups. Each had its own chief male and female god. Believers paid homage in village temples and open shrines in rural areas. Asherah was associated with fertility and widely worshiped.

Nonetheless, this interpretation remains controversial. There are many respected Biblical scholars who continue to believe that David and Solomon's empire was real. And, they keep searching for evidence.

Three such archaeologists recently excavated Khirbet Yattir, a ten-acre mound south of Jerusalem and west of the narrow part of the Dead Sea. In the Bible, Yattir is associated with David, and it had never been excavated. Believing the Bible to be a reliable guide for the 900s BCE, the researchers expected to find evidence that Khirbet Yattir existed at that time. They were disappointed. They found no artifacts dating between the 1200s and 700s BCE. Nonetheless, they continue to believe in the historical accuracy of the Bible as it relates to David's time. In regard to their failure to find artifacts from the time of David, the researchers say:

> "Does this mean that the Bible is wrong? ...Hardly. All it means is that we haven't found those levels at Yattir yet--or that they may have been destroyed....It is important not to reach conclusions too quickly based on the absence of evidence." (Hanan Eshel, Jodi Magness and Eli Shenhav, "Surprises at Yattir." (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August, 2001, pp. 33-34.)

It is possible that Eshel, Magness or Shenhav may be successful in their future archaeological explorations. But until such evidence is found, academic scholars like Finkelstein and Silberman assume that the stories of David and Solomon and their "united kingdom" are much like the accounts of Israelite history that led up to them.



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Chapter Five

Israel and Judah--900 to 600 BCE

Hebrew-speaking states, their kings and their capital cities first come to the written attention of their neighbors in the 800s BCE. There were two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Israel was the first to emerge in the somewhat gentle hill country north of Jerusalem. Judah, with Jerusalem as its town-sized capital, was in the more rugged country to the south. It lagged about a century behind Israel in economic development.[1] Samaria in Israel was the first Hebrew town to develop into a city, and the first significant kings were in Israel. As explained in the last lesson, there is no evidence from archaeological or non-biblical sources that there was a "united kingdom" under David or Solomon.

Israel's wealth was based upon its production of two agricultural products that were in demand and upon its controlling trade routes to Assyria. Israel's hilly lands were ideal for growing grapes for wine and olive trees for oil, and producing wine and olive oil became state industries.

> Such an industry required insuring that huge quantities of grapes and olives were planted, tended to, and picked, and that wine and olive oil were pressed, bottled, and sent out to market. Running such a system would require a developed political administration to coordinate activities in different areas of the kingdom and to oversee extensive trading networks both inside the kingdom and out. (Markus. *View from Nebo*, pp. 132-33.)

Israel's security and much of its wealth was based upon its leaders' willingness to be vassals of the Assyrian king. Israel had to pay tribute to Assyria, which was its overlord. There was little choice because Assyria was the super-power at the time. But in return, Assyria provided protection and was Israel's major trading partner. Its wine and olive oil mostly went to Assyria, and products from Arabia also passed through its territory.

As Israel prospered and its cities came into being, the first written form of the Hebrew language emerged. In developing their writing, Hebrew scholars closely followed the Phoenician lead. The Hebrew alphabet consisted of 22 symbols for consonants read from right to left. It had no vowel symbols or punctuation. Nonetheless, it was good enough for keeping track of the kingdom's trading activities. Most of the writing that has survived consists of ownership notations on seals, some administrative and commercial records, short appeals to various gods, and ancient graffiti on rocks called ostraca. It is possible that Yahweh origin stories--such as one finds in the Bible--were now written, but none has survived.

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[1] "Out of a total of approximately forty-five thousand people living in the hill country [during the 900s BCE], a full 90 percent would have inhabited the villages of the north. (*Finkelstein & Silberman*, p. 143)

The Israelite king Omri was the first Hebrew-speaking monarch to come to the attention of neighboring kingdoms.[2] He ruled from 884-873 BCE, built Samaria and made it his capital. His son, Ahab, became king when he died, and he ruled until 852 BCE. Ahab turned the small kingdom into a prosperous state. Its cities eventually included Megiddo, Jezreel, Hazar, and Dan--in addition to Samaria.[3] Its southern border was about 20 miles north of Jerusalem--which was still a hill town, not a city. Ahab's kingdom then extended north to the area that is now Lebanon. From west to east, he ruled territories from the Mediterranean coast to the Jordan River and a few miles beyond.

In the Bible, Omri is described in a very biased way--as are almost all other Israelite leaders. 1 Kings 16:25 says "Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did more evil than all who were before him." This "evil" is described in detail, and includes cooperating with Assyria. Ahab apparently was even worse. Ahab too "did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all that were before him." (1 Kings 16:30)

Israel lasted for almost 200 years, until 722 BCE. In that year its king thought it was strong enough to stop paying tribute to Assyria. He thought wrong. Assyria attacked and utterly destroyed the nation. Many Israelites were taken captive and scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire. Some of those not killed or captured escaped south to Judah. Judah was not attacked because its king continued to pay his tribute to Assyria, and the kingdom had little wealth anyway. It was a rugged land, and before 722 BCE it had few towns and no cities. What it did have was a ruling family living in Jerusalem whose members traced their heritage back to a founding father named David.

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[2] According to the Bible, there had been seven kings before Omri going back to Jeroboam I.

[3] Some scholars think the David and Solomon biblical stories may be based upon Omri and Ahab in Israel.

Now, however, the situation in Judah rapidly changed. With refugees coming from Israel and from outlying areas, Jerusalem soon reached city size. Like Omri and Ahab earlier, its kings began glorifying the city with imposing buildings. Full-time scribes also may have worked combining ancient traditions into a "history" of the people.[4]

This new-found prosperity did not last long. Like Israel previously, Judah's king (Hezekiah, 727-698 BCE) also thought he could stop paying tribute to Assyria. Hezekiah believed he could stop being a vassal because Sargon II, the strong king of Assyria, had died and his son, Sennacherib, was inexperienced in war. In addition, Jerusalem could be defended much better than Samaria, Israel's old capital. Jerusalem was on a hill-top, not on an open plain. It was heavily fortified with thick walls and it had a reliable supply of water. Also, Hezekiah apparently believed that Yahweh would protect Judah.

Hezekiah was mistaken as the king of Israel had been mistaken. Sennacherib bypassed Jerusalem in his campaign. Instead, he attacked Judah's other cities and towns one-by-one, destroying each in turn. When only Jerusalem was left, Sennacherib blockaded it as he prepared to starve its inhabitants into submission. At this point Hezekiah capitulated. He paid a huge ransom, remained a vassal and gave up Judah's best farmland. In essence, Judah was reduced to nothing except for the city of Jerusalem and some near-desert country just to the south.

This account also is very different from the biblical one. The Bible presents Hezekiah as a great king who saves Judah from Assyrians. Sennacherib, the writers say, was punished--killed by his sons when he returned to his capital of Nineveh.[5] A non-biblical source says he "apparently lived for another twenty years after the war with Judah." (*The View from Nebo*, p. 134)

Regardless, Judah did continue to exist, and better times were ahead. When Hezekiah died, his son, Manasseh took over and ruled for 55 years. Under Manasseh (698-642 BCE), Judah was a faithful Assyrian vassal state, and the people were economically rewarded. During Manasseh's long rule Judah expanded far to the south. Population grew as farmers and herdsmen learned how to make the most of fertile nooks in the near-desert environment. Now they grew the grapes and olive trees and made wine and oil for export as Israel had done. Working with Assyria, Judah also was a partner in the trade from Arabia. Camels had been domesticated, and this "technological advance" made overland transport through desert areas possible. Judah grew wealthy as perfumes and spices made their way north from Arabia to Assyria. Nonetheless, Manasseh is condemned at length by the Bible authors for working with the Assyrians.[6]

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[4] This statement is controversial. Some experts say that Yahweh priests from Israel may have brought religious scrolls south with them, and these were the start of the Bible. See *Who Wrote the Bible* by Richard Elliott Friedman (1997. HarperSanFrancisco) for a detailed explanation of this theory. At the other extreme some authorities claim that no part of the Bible (in recognizable form) likely was written before 500 BCE. See the next lesson.

[5] See 2 Kings, Chapter 18 and 19.

Religious changes also were taking place. During the 600s BCE a "Yahweh only" movement apparently was gathering strength. Perhaps it had started in Israel before 722 BCE, and fleeing priests had brought the idea south when Assyria destroyed their kingdom. Maybe the "one God for Judah" idea had originated during the time of Hezekiah. Regardless, King Josiah--who ruled from 639-609 BCE--appears to have strongly supported the movement, at least according to the Bible. He used his power to radically change the nature of religious practice in his state.

According to Bible accounts, Josiah ended all worship in the Jerusalem temple except that which related to Yahweh. He then centralized worship in Jerusalem, destroying the temples in all other towns. (There weren't many.) More important perhaps, he extended his religious "purification" campaign to rural areas.

> "...all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; he burned them outside of Jerusalem... "And he broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes which were in the house of the LORD...And he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD....And he broke in pieces the pillars [dedicated to other gods] ...and filled their places with the bones of men." (2 Kings 23: 4, 7, 11, and 14)

Josiah seems to have been more than a destroyer. According to the Bible he also was a religious innovator. He started religious practices that Finkelstein and Silberman say "dramatically changed what it meant to be an Israelite and laid the foundations for future Judaism and for Christianity." (p. 276) He did this by having his scribes construct a history of his people, the core of the Old testament. The Israelite heritage story that emerged begins with creation. It traces descendants of Adam and Eve through Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon and ends in Josiah's time.[7]

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[6] 2 Kings 21: 1-18

Josiah had several reasons for having a written story of his people's "history" created.[8] First, he probably believed that the oral stories (and maybe early written accounts) of his ancestors were true. Hebrew story-tellers--like those in surrounding kingdoms--would have been developing their "heritage presentations" for hundreds of years. Moreover the storytellers of each generation--and the scribes who followed--probably believed that their ever-expanding tales of Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and the others actually said and did things much like those they were composing.

In addition to creating written accounts of Hebrew origins, Josiah also seems to have understood that religion involves emotions. Having destroyed many of the old ceremonies, he now created new ones in which Yahweh worshipers could act out parts of the Israelite heritage story. The Jewish Passover is one of these. According to Finkelstein and Silberman, likely it was first celebrated in 622 BCE. (p. 280)

> "And the king [Josiah] commanded all the people, 'Keep the Passover to the LORD your God'....For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem. (2 Kings 23: 21-23)

Finally, Josiah had worldly ambitions that related to the heritage stories that his priests created. He apparently wanted to conquer the territory north of Jerusalem that he believed once was part of David and Solomon's "united kingdom." And, he thought he saw his opportunity.

Assyria had withdrawn from its "old Israel" province about 630 BCE in order to fight enemies and rebellions in the east. Josiah now made a vassal relationship with Egypt. (*Unearthing the Bible*, p. 283) The connection with Egypt did not work out, however.

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[7] There are various lines of evidence that led archaeologists and historians to conclude that the first books of the Bible were written in the 600s BCE in a form we would recognize. One kind of evidence relates the nature of the world into which such Biblical personalities as Abraham have been placed. It's a world of the 600s BCE, not the world of 600 years previously. Cities are described as they existed in the 600s BCE, not centuries earlier when some didn't even exist. The description of Egypt also is "uncannily similar in its geographical details "to the Egypt of the 600s BCE. (Finkelstein & Silberman, p. 283)

[8] This is the view of many biblical scholars, but not all. All of the books of the Hebrew Bible were heavily edited after the Babylonian captivity period. Some scholars think that the books were first written during the Persian period or later--after 500 BCE.

In 609 BCE the Egyptian Pharaoh, Nechos II, killed Josiah when they were meeting in Megiddo. Megiddo was outside of Judah, and it is not known why Josiah had traveled to the city which was away from the protection of his army. Maybe he was renewing his vassal relationship. Vassal covenants were between monarchs, and they had to be renewed when a new leader came to power. The old Pharaoh, Nechos's father, had died the year before. Nechos was nearby, reestablishing Egyptian power among the coastal Canaanite city-states.

Neither the Bible nor any Egyptian source says what went wrong at the meeting. Maybe they disagreed about who would control the Arabian trade routes through southern Judah. Maybe they argued about who should have the lands north of Judah that Josiah wanted to conquer. Maybe they had differing strategies concerning Assyria which was now falling apart. Whatever the circumstances, after Josiah was killed Judah came under increasing Egyptian control. By 600 BCE, Judah was little more than an Egyptian province.

This was the beginning of much worse things to come. Egypt was unable or unwilling to protect Judah, and within 25 years it would be conquered by the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, who were ruled by Nebuchadnezzar II. As we will see, Judah came to an end, and its royal family--the House of David--ceased to exist.

Chapter Six

Hebrews, Babylonians, Persians--600 to 500 BCE

In 605 BCE Nebuchadnezzar II became the king of the Chaldeans, who also are called the Neo-Babylonians. They ruled Mesopotamia from Babylon, their capital.[1]

Nebuchadnezzar ruled for 43 years, and he was the Chaldeans' greatest king. During the early part of his long rule he conquered lands all the way west to the Mediterranean Sea. These included Judah. Later in his reign he concentrated on public works, turning Babylon into a splendid city.

Nebuchadnezzar first overran Jerusalem in 597 BCE, taking King Jehoiakim and other influential Hebrews as captives. When the remaining priestly leaders of Judah tried to revolt in 588 and 587 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar brought his army back, destroyed the government, made Judah a Babylonian province, and took more captives back to Babylon. In biblical history, this destruction of Judah is known as the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity period.[2]

Although the kingdom of Judah was destroyed, the history of the Hebrew people continued. Their defeat was total, but it was different from what had happened to the Hebrews in the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE. Unlike the Israelites, the Hebrews of Judah did not lose their identity.

There are several reasons. First, Nebuchadnezzar did not scatter his captives among other peoples as the Assyrians had done. Rather, they were allowed to settle together in communities in and around Babylon. In these areas they continued to speak Hebrew, worship Yahweh and, in general, to follow their distinctive way of life.

Secondly, in old Judah outside of Jerusalem the lives of Hebrews remained relatively unchanged. They continued their age-old ways. Third, Nebuchadnezzar did not bring outsider colonizers into Judah. (Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 307)[3] Finally, the captivity period was short. Only 50 years later the captive Jews who were still alive and their descendants were allowed to return their homeland.

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[1] Nebuchadnezzar's father had joined with other groups to defeat the Assyrians in 612 BCE. He was the Chaldean founder of the new (or Neo) Babylonian Empire.

[2] Probably no more than 20,000 upper-class people were taken. (Finkelstein and Silberman, p. 306)

Hebrews in Babylon were able to return to Jerusalem because the ruling Chaldeans were themselves defeated. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom lasted only 24 years beyond his death. In 538 BCE, Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire, defeated the Chaldeans and conquered Babylon. (Persia was east of Mesopotamia, the land that's now the country of Iran.) Once in power, Cyrus encouraged the Jews living in and around Babylon to return to their "promised land." Seemingly, he wanted Jerusalem and surrounding territory to become a strong buffer against Egypt.

To accomplish this goal he made Judah a province of the Persian Empire. During the Persian period, it is usually referred to as Yehud, a name that is a variation of Judah. The Persians ruled through governors and relied on the political support of Jewish priestly leaders. Cyrus and later Persian kings even helped the Jews rebuild their temple to Yahweh. (Note that the words *Jews* and *Jewish* are being used for the first time. Since they no longer had their own kingdom or separate political identity, those Hebrews whose religious and cultural life centered on Yahweh worship at the Jerusalem Temple became known as Jews.)[4]

Many descendants of the Babylonian captives chose not go back to Yehud, however. They were building good lives for themselves in Mesopotamia. Under the Persians they were allowed to own and inherit land, and a few even rose to high positions in the Persian Government.

Moreover, the children and grandchildren of the Babylonian captives were not exactly welcomed when they returned to Jerusalem. Those Hebrews who had stayed in Judah around Jerusalem had not maintained Josiah's religious dictates. They had gone back to their ancient ways of worshiping many gods in addition to Yahweh (if they had ever stopped). The "newcomers" assumed control and demanded they help build a temple where only Yahweh would be worshiped. The returnees had Persian support, and by 500 BCE the new temple to Yahweh existed in Jerusalem.

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[3] For instance, The villages of Mizpah, Bethel and Gibeon north of Jerusalem were not destroyed. South of Jerusalem, archaeological evidence indicates that old ways of life continued in villages such as Bethlehem.

[4] The English language word *Jew* evolved from the Roman word *Judeaus*, which derived from *Yehud* and *Judah*.

Some authorities such as Philip Davies (*In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*) doubt the accuracy of this historical account. Davies doesn't think that a Yahweh-only reform movement ever took place in Judah during Josiah's time. He reasons that no king voluntarily would give so much power to his priests. Also, he says that it is unlikely that the Babylonians would have allowed priest-captives to take their scrolls with them to Babylon--or that the captives could work on them if they had them. If ancient scrolls still existed, Davies reasons, it's more likely that they survived somewhere in Judah rather than in Babylon. Davies is not even sure the "returnees" included descendants of the group that was taken east in the 580s BCE. Regardless, people coming from Babylon supervised the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, and it was dedicated to the worship of Yahweh.

At about the same time scribes associated with the Temple were busy constructing (or reconstructing) the Hebrew scriptures. They wrote in Hebrew, and they based their writings on whatever old scrolls and king lists may have survived. They also included ancient, oral folk-tales in their sacred accounts. Together their series of scrolls became the heart of the Hebrew Bible. Their scrolls told a story that began with creation and continued uninterrupted into the Babylonian captivity. In broad outline, the narrative they developed is as follows:

Genesis starts with Yahweh's creation of the universe. Adam and Eve are the first couple, and they live in the Garden of Eden. But, they disobey Yahweh, and must leave Eden. The narrative then follows their children and later descendants, generation after generation.

During Noah's time Yahweh becomes angry with human actions, and he floods the earth. Only Noah and his family survive to repopulate the world. Later descendants of Noah are placed in Mesopotamia where they try to build a tower to heaven--the Tower of Babel story. The effort angers Yahweh, and he stops construction by making the builders unable to understand each other. They find themselves speaking many different languages--and they became scattered over the earth.

This story probably relates to Mesopotamian ziggurats, and especially the one in Babylon.

Each major city in the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley had a ziggurat--which was a huge step-like structure built of mud-brick and baked brick. Stairs went from one level to the next. Commercial activities often took place on the lower levels. On top there was a small building, temple or shrine dedicated to the chief god of the city. The ziggurat in Babylon had seven levels, and its shrine was dedicated to Marduk. At one time it had been destroyed by the Assyrians. However, Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BCE) had rebuilt it in a spectacular manner--to a height of about 300 feet. This reconstruction took place during the early years of the Babylonian Captivity period, and Hebrews in Babylon would have witnessed it.

Genesis ends with Abraham. Abraham, another descendant of Noah, was born in Mesopotamia. His family moves northwest through the Fertile Crescent. As an adult, he continues traveling through the Fertile Crescent southwest into Canaan. Genesis ends as Abraham's grandchildren prepare to go to Egypt to avoid a drought.

The Exodus scroll comes next. It takes place in Egypt and the Sinai Desert. After a brief connecting passage, the author skips ahead to Moses who lived hundreds of years after Abraham. Exodus deals with Moses's life from his birth through his success as an Egyptian administrator. Then, with Yahweh's help, Moses leads the Israelites as they flee from Egypt. The Passover is described in Chapter 12, and the book includes two versions of the Ten Commandments. One is in Chapter 20 and the other in Chapter 34. The first will sound familiar to Jews and Christians. The Chapter 34 version is different and rarely referred to.

Leviticus follows Exodus. It takes its name from the Levite priests who are thought to have written it. It is a book of laws that, according to the narrative, Moses received from Yahweh. Repeatedly the text reads, "And the LORD said to Moses...." These introductory statements are followed by hundreds of detailed instructions for righteous living. Many are about how sacrifices should be performed. In Leviticus 19, commandments such as one finds in the Decalogue are mixed with prohibitions against practicing witchcraft, cutting one's hair, having tattoos and the like. (The priestly duties and privileges mentioned in Leviticus are those that were common during the Persian Era following the Babylonian captivity, not hundreds of years previously.)

The book of Numbers comes next. It begins when the Israelites have been in the Sinai desert for two years, and Moses conducts a census of the Israelite tribes. The book then catalogs their desert experiences over the next 38 years. It ends with the Israelites located just east of the Jordan River, about to enter their promised land.

"Deuteronomy" is the fifth book in the Bible, the last in the Torah. It is written as Moses's farewell speech before the Israelites cross the Jordan River into the "Promised Land." This scroll reviews Israelite "history," and it also focuses on rules for daily living. In general, the stress here is on dealing fairly with fellow Israelites. The book also includes a familiar version of the Ten Commandments in chapter 5. All five of these books of the Torah--Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy--come out of oral tradition.

Other scrolls of the time--later named Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings--carry the story of the Israelites from Moses's time to the Babylonian Captivity. Joshua and Judges--also from oral tradition--describe how, in the authors' view, Canaan was captured and colonized.

Samuel tells the story of David, and 1 Kings is on Solomon. David and Solomon are historical figures, but the Biblical narrative--from a historical perspective--largely is legendary. The stories are like those of Homer's Odyssey. Jerusalem was no more than a hill-town of a few hundred people during the 900s BCE when they were its "kings." The Biblical accounts of David's bandit-like days may have a factual basis, but this is guesswork. Neither David nor Solomon could have governed more than a few thousand townsmen and herders living in almost-desert-like conditions south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem itself would have had no more than a few hundred people. Neither king would have been capable of controlling the thickly populated, more developed, less rugged hill country north of Jerusalem.[5]

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[5] Myths of some long-gone "golden age" are very common. They're psychologically rewarding, especially for marginal groups such as the people of Judah. Linking one's own program to a glorified founder--as the writer about Josiah tried to do--also is a way of establishing authority and mobilizing people for war.

The biblical material becomes somewhat more historical in 1 Kings. Here the focus is on the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah which came after Solomon's reign. Hebrew writing was in existence, and king-lists and scrolls of one kind or another may have survived the Babylonian Captivity. At least, the list of the rulers in Israel and Judah is correlated (fitted together), and some of them are mentioned in records from other cultures.

Although they are historical in this sense, these books are religious writings. The affairs of the two kingdoms are written as if Yahweh is controlling earthly events by manipulating the natural world and by performing miracles. The authors also have a strong bias toward the kingdom of Judah (where the first scrolls may have been written) and against Israel.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel are two other books that likely were in existence in 500 BCE or shortly thereafter. Jeremiah provides a (not very accurate) description of life in Judah under the Babylonians. Ezekiel writes about the captives who lived in Babylon.

All of these books continued to be heavily edited for another 400 years. Jewish scribes in Yehud were expected to modify the stories, use them to help people understand conditions that existed in their own times. Today historians distinguish between accounts of actual earthly events and works of literature. They separate their personal research from the words and ideas they have copied from others. Such distinctions did not exist in ancient times. Scribes who wrote (or edited) the Hebrew Bible after the Babylonian Captivity were like oral storytellers in these respects.

As a result, the view of Yahweh that a modern reader receives when reading any Old Testament book--from Genesis on--essentially reflects the views of authors and editors during Persian, Greek and Roman times. The next chapter will examine the 200 years of Persian rule in more detail. The influence of the Greeks and Romans will be considered in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Seven

Jews and Persians--500 to 300 BCE

The Jews lived under the Persians from 538 to 332 BCE, until they were conquered by Alexander the Great. We will refer to the period when old Judah became a Persian province as Yehud times. This 200-year period is critically important for understanding the Hebrew Bible as it exists today.

The old scrolls--such as they were--now were enlarged, thoroughly revised and many new books added to the list of Temple scriptures. Almost all experts agree that much of the biblical material that relates to priestly duties and privileges comes from the Persian era regardless of where it is found in the Old Testament. The priestly duties and privileges that are spelled out in Leviticus and elsewhere are Temple rules during Yehud times, but they were written as if they were in place centuries before. This helped establish their authoritativeness.

Priestly duties and responsibilities received such attention because the Temple religious community now was the dominant political force in Yehud. Members had recently arrived from the Babylon area, and they were in charge of rebuilding the Temple. They were the force that was holding the Jewish communities of Yehud together because there no longer was a king. The Davidic royal family that had ruled Judah was no more. The last known member in this family line died or disappeared shortly before 500 BCE.[1] Being an Israelite, now a Jew, could no longer mean being a citizen of a particular kingdom because none existed. Rather Jewish identity now meant attachment to Yahweh, the new Temple in Jerusalem and to a particular set of religious materials. The Torah was especially revered.

The theme of the materials that were written and rewritten in this period involves a covenant idea. The general form is similar to the agreements that strong states in the Middle East had with small neighboring kingdoms.

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[1] Zerubbabel was apparently the last of the Davidic line. He came back from exile and helped reconstruct the temple, but he "disappears from the biblical accounts after the completion of the Temple" in 516 BCE. *(The Bible Unearthed*, p.310)

They are much like those that probably existed between the powerful Assyrians and the small states of Israel and Judah. Yahweh and Israelite leaders are described as making binding promises to each other. Yahweh promises protection to the Israelites in return for obedience and faithfulness. But, the people and their leaders are said to fail in keeping the covenant. So, they are punished again and again.

This covenant idea is first illustrated by the Adam and Eve story. They are kicked out of the Garden of Eden for eating fruit from a forbidden tree. Then, general human sinfulness caused Yahweh to flood the world, killing everybody except for Noah and his family. Then, Yahweh caused a breakdown in the ability of people to communicate with others. This is the Tower of Babel, multiple languages story. Then, Solomon's follies made Yahweh split the kingdom. Then, the evilness of the kings of Israel caused Yahweh to use Assyrians to destroy it. Finally, the sinfulness in Judah caused Yahweh to have the Babylonians destroy the kingdom. Although Josiah is pictured as a good king, that wasn't enough. His people (as well as his son and grandson) hadn't obeyed all of Yahweh's commandments. So, Judah was destroyed.

In broad outline, this was the story that was worked out by the priestly community in Jerusalem during the Persian period. In it and through it historians perceive a movement toward monotheism. Monotheism is the belief that the entire cosmos is ruled by one God. Josiah may have had "Yahweh only" beliefs, but his thinking would have been confined to Israelites. He would have assumed that other groups had other gods.

Now priestly thinking was broadening. If Yahweh could flood the whole world and use the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish the Jews (and the Persians to help them), didn't this imply that Yahweh actually controlled almost everything? As the answer progressively became "Yes," Jewish intellectuals edged closer to seeing Yahweh as a universal god.

In addition to refocusing (or creating) the historical works that have been discussed, scholars generally agree that the other books in the Hebrew Bible were first written during Persian times or later.

These include 1 and 2 Chronicles. Chronicles repeats all Israelite "history" found in the Torah. First Chronicles starts again with Adam who, through an extended genealogy, is linked to David and Solomon. Second Chronicles again takes the story from Solomon through the histories of Israel and Judah. The last chapter ends with a summary of the Babylonian Captivity.

> Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him, Let him go up." (2 Chronicles 36:23)

Books that were definitely written after 500 BCE were Ezra, Nehemiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Ruth, Esther, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes.

These books include a wide variety of materials. Some are social teachings. Some are bitter condemnations. Some (such as Psalms) are poetical works that have hymns of praise to Yahweh. Or, they ask help. Some are sermons or collections of Jewish folkwisdom. Proverbs has practical advice for success in this world as well as speculations about the meaning of life, suffering and death. A few scrolls are love stories. Ruth and Esther are romances, and The Song of Solomon is a sexually-oriented love poem.

These scrolls were compiled from many sources, old and new. Some elements probably are ancient, but most were first written during the Persian period or later. Taken together these books show the:

> "devotion of the ordinary Israelite at times of joy, crisis, worship and personal reflection. In most cases, they are extremely difficult to link to any specific historical events or authors. They are the products of a continuous process of composition that stretched over hundreds of years. Although the earliest material in this collection (in Psalms and Lamentations) may have been assembled...soon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, most of [these books] were apparently composed much later, from the fifth to the second century BCE--in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. (Finkelstein & Silberman, p. 6)

Some books are presented as predictions of the future. Historians say they were written after the events "predicted" had already occurred. This is a literary device that was used to guide people's thoughts and actions without placing the author in danger. Readers of the time period would have been familiar with this kind of writing.

In summary, biblical scholars generally agree that whatever bible books may have been in existence before the Persian era--including the Torah--now were basically transformed. They agree that many books in the Hebrew Bible were put into writing for the first time. They do not agree on how much was in existence before 500 BCE or how the materials that were in existence survived during the Babylonian captivity period.

Some scholars such as Philip Davies believe the biblical transformation during the Persian era was so complete that it makes little sense to even talk about the Hebrew Bible as existing before this time. According to this line of thinking, the temple scribes--who were a part of the Persian/Jewish leadership group in Yehud--collected ancient stories and scrolls (if they existed) and wrote the Torah along with the other Old Testament scrolls.

In this perspective, the stories about Josiah trying to reform Judaism are as mythological as those of David and Solomon. Davies and similar scholars do not deny Josiah was a real king. However, they view him as like other monarchs of his time. They do not think that he would have initiated any great "religious reform" because it would have taken away much of his own power and transferred it to the Jerusalem temple priests. Any reforms that he might have made didn't last anyway. When the Persian leaders arrived in Yehud, they found the people worshiping much as they had in ages past. Yahweh was their chief god, but they had others.

In the view of these scholars, the story of priests carefully carrying their ancient scrolls into exile doesn't make sense. It doesn't jibe with the political realities of the age--how exiles were treated by their captors. The whole idea of exiling leaders is to break up the society, not to give them a haven where they could spend their time compiling their cultural history.

For beginning history students these scholarly disagreements about what Biblical fragments actually existed in 600 BCE as opposed to 400 BCE may be of little interest. However it happened, by the end of the Persian period Judaism was starting to become a religion as we would understand the term. That is, Jews were increasingly believing in only one god, Yahweh. They were beginning to see Yahweh in a universal way. They were beginning to perceive him as the source for human morality. They were beginning to see him as a God who had commandments in writing that humans could know and follow. In short, Yahweh was becoming seen as a God who could be responsive to all humans--as well as rewarding them for good behavior and punishing sinfulness.

The idea that supernatural forces interact with humans is an extremely ancient one. Attempts to communicate with gods through various means can be traced back into stone-age times. Once writing was in existence, it was a natural step to believe that gods could provide guidance through writing as well as through such things as astronomical happenings, flights of birds, dreams, the configurations of sheep intestines and other such occult means.

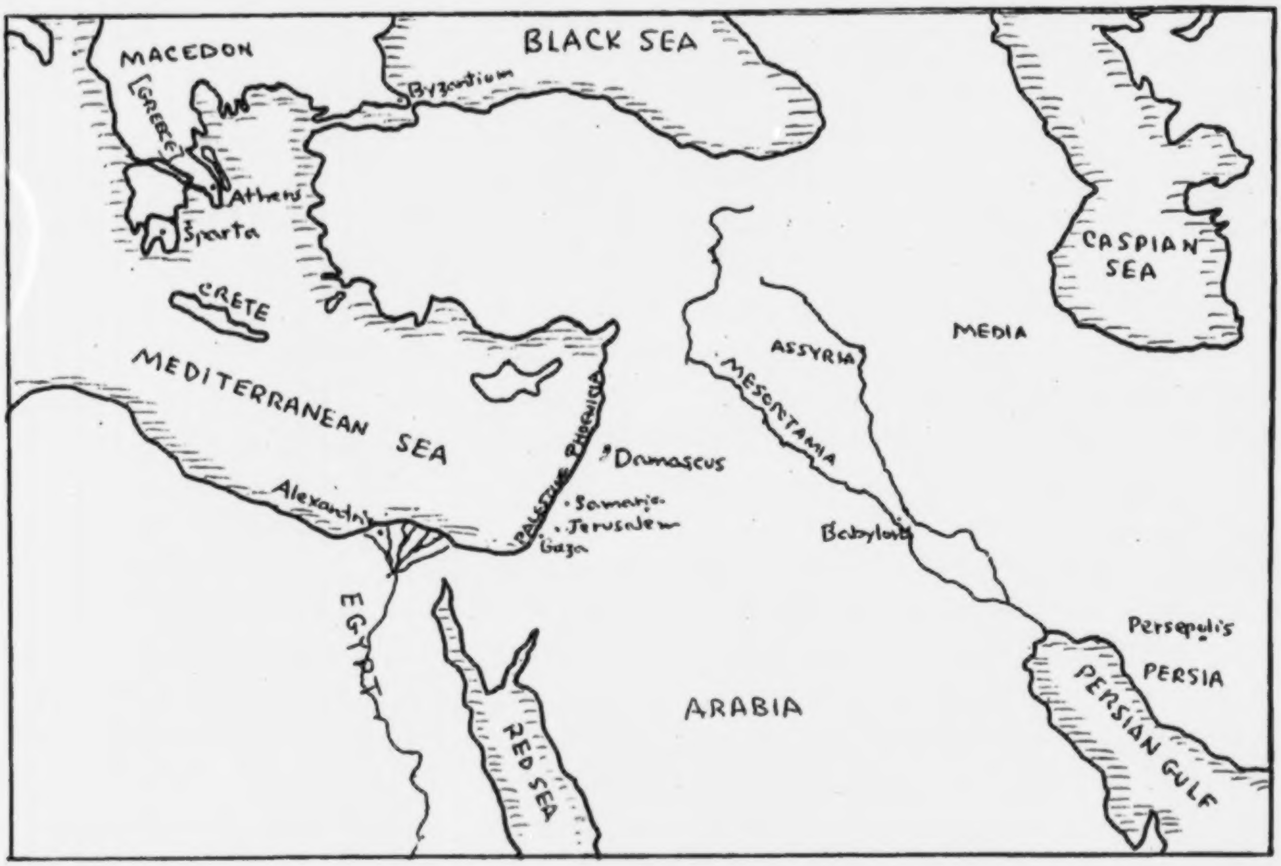
To clarify the perspective of academic historical research and information at this point, the following may help. There are essential differences between sacred tradition and academic history. This lesson and the others in the series are focused on biblical scholarship. There is an assumption that written materials--including holy books--have worldly origins. It's assumed that the Hebrew Bible came into being gradually through human efforts, the result of the efforts of religious people over many generations. Starting with oral traditions, it grew more sophisticated as it was put into written form and then revised repeatedly as the Jews' concept of Yahweh enlarged. It reflects their long search for spiritual understanding. From a historical perspective, no holy book "comes from heaven." To believe that the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon or any other text embodies the "words" of God takes one into the belief system of a particular faith.

Religious people often do not accept this perspective. However, it is the scholarly understanding of history that is proper in American public schools. Historical information presented needs to be free of bias. It needs to be verified by kinds of evidence that can be cross-checked. Miraculous understandings of human events are religion-specific. The miracles that people in one religious group accept as true are different from those accepted by people of a different faith. As Kenneth Woodward states in the Book of Miracles:

> Pentecostal miracles do not count as such for Catholic Christians, just as Catholic miracles of intercession have no meaning for Protestants. Similarly, Muslim miracles are not recognized by Buddhists. Even Hindus...cannot appropriate the miracle stories of a Christian, a Muslim or even a Buddhist

> saint except as manifestations of what they understand as a universal God-consciousness. (*The Book of Miracles: The Meaning of the Miracle Stories in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam*, Simon & Schuster, 2000, p. 383).

Public schools may teach students what miracles are associated with Judaism as well as those associated with Christianity and other religions. The Hebrew Bible is laden with miracle stories. However, this lesson and the others in the booklet are not designed to say which Yahweh miracles, if any, different groups of Jews and Christians accept today and how they interpret them. Rather, these lessons are to help students understand how the Hebrew Bible--the Christian Old Testament--came into being from the perspective of biblical historians and other scholars.



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Chapter Eight

Jews, Greeks & Hasmonaeans--300 BCE to 50 BCE

The Greek period begins with the conquests of Alexander the Great of Macedonia.

By 323 BCE, Alexander's armies had conquered lands all the way east to India. His conquests included the Persian empire of which Yehud was a part. When Alexander died, his generals split his territories into smaller states which they governed as separate states. When generals died, their descendants took over, so these states became hereditary kingdoms. The Ptolemy family ruled Egypt. Yehud--now called Judea--was part of Egypt for a while, then the Seleucids took over. This ruling family had descended from Seleucus, one of Alexander's generals, and it ruled from Damascus, the capital of modern Syria.

Alexander's goal was to create new Greek-like cities in the territories he conquered, and he left groups of soldiers in strategic areas to accomplish this purpose. Seleucus and other generals followed Alexander's plan even after he died. As a result, new Greek-like cities arose in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East. In these urban areas Greek ideas merged with the beliefs of the conquered upper-class people. This merging is called Hellenism.

> The matrix of Hellenism was the city. Wherever Alexander conquered he established cities and left behind resident Macedonian populations of soldiers, officials and Merchants. The first practical consequence of this policy was that Greek became the language of trade and government. (Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, p. 9)

Intellectual Jews were now reading the works of Greek philosophers whose ideas began influencing their thinking. Plato was one of the greatest of these philosophers, and he believed in "the existence of a divine, unchanging reality" where eternal forms of things existed. This is one Greek idea that "became crucial to many monotheists when they tried to express their conception of God." (Karen Armstrong, *A History of God*, p. 35)[1] By this time Jewish scholars also were working their way toward believing that Yahweh was the one universal God (as we have seen). However, monotheism caused problems for them.

Their ancient Jewish scriptures had story after story of Yahweh acting much like a tyrant, magician or superman. How could highly educated, Hellenized Jews make sense out of an earth-walking, side-taking, selfish, sacrifice-demanding Yahweh and at the same time see him as God of the whole cosmos? Again, Greek philosophers provided them with a way to reconcile these conflicts.

The answer was to interpret the Torah and their other religious scrolls in an allegorical way. The ancient stories of Yahweh could be kept, but they must be read like the Greeks read about Zeus or other Gods. Instead of taking the Torah as actual history, it must be seen as illustrating universal moral truths.

Fredriksen (*From Jesus to Christ)* describes the rethinking in this way. A scripture with a God that concerned:

> himself about fruit trees, deceitful serpents, and expulsions--obviously was not its true, essential meaning. This was available only through the spiritual interpretation of allegory, whereby Adam was revealed to stand for Reason and Eve for the...sensory component of the mind which if distracted by lower things (the snake), will pull even Reason down with her. A literal reading of the sacred text indicated the reader's ignorance, not the scriptures' validity and meaningfulness. Obviously, maintained Philo [A Jewish philosopher from Alexandria] the changeless, transcendent God did not directly involve himself in the ordering of the cosmos. Rather, he shaped it by his Word, the divine Logos [that] represents the point of contact between the human and divine realms...Through the Logos, too, the soul could return to God. (p. 15)

Philo maintained that the many Jewish rules of conduct should continue to be observed because they symbolized moral commitments. Circumcision, for instance, demonstrated a man's control over his sexual passion. Not eating pork meant one rejected the bad characteristics attributed to hogs, and so on. Following the Torah laws demonstrated one's godliness.

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[1] Plato built upon the ideas of still earlier Greek Philosophers. One (Parmenides, 513-448 BCE) also believed in an absolute Being that was "eternal, without beginning, needing nothing, beyond passions, indestructible, unchangeable, and invisible." (Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven*, p. 19)

Hellenism and the Greek language became such dominant forces that as time went by fewer and fewer Jews could read their Hebrew scriptures. Because of this situation, the intellectual Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt, began translating the books of the Old Testament into Greek so that they could continue to be read by members of the community. Fredriksen says that by the 290s BCE:

> familiarity with Hebrew had faded to such a degree that anonymous Jewish translators in Alexandria produced a written Greek version of...the Torah (Teaching), so that the scriptures would be accessible during public worship. The Greek version of the entire [Hebrew] Bible was available by the end of the second century B.C.E [200 BCE] (p. 13)

This Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible is called the *Septuagint*, which means seventy. The name comes from a miracle legend that developed. According to the tale, 72 sages independently translated the biblical scrolls. When they later compared their work they found that they had used identical Greek words in every part of every scroll from Genesis on!

Reading their own religious literature in Greek further Hellenized Jewish intellectuals. Human thinking largely involves the mental manipulation of words. People who speak different languages think somewhat differently. Jews such as Philo conceived of Yahweh very differently than did the priests back in Jerusalem who had resisted Hellenization.

By and large these priests continued to believe their scrolls were an actual historical record of their ancestors. They did not accept the idea that Yahweh should be treated as Greek philosophers such as Plato treated Zeus. They also refused to accept the idea that a Greek ruler in Damascus should to be honored.

These Jerusalem Jews were living in their promised land, but they saw it as an alienated land. They might have the freedom to largely run their local affairs and to worship Yahweh pretty much as they pleased. But, they also had to "bow down" to the Seleucid King in Damascus. They saw themselves as being "ruled by idolaters whose policies could at any time affect the operation of the Temple itself...." (*From Jesus to Christ*, pp. 77-8)[2]

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[2] The Greek rulers didn't have much respect for Jewish customs which were very different from their own. Most Greeks, for example, saw nothing wrong with nudity or male homosexuality, practices condemned in Judaism. Further, Jewish food taboos and hallowed practices--such as male circumcision--mystified them.

Finally, in the 180s BCE, there was revolution in Judea. The details of the uprising are complex, but apparently two Jewish factions started battling with each other for power. Antiochus, the Seleucid king, thought that the Jews were rebelling, and he brought his soldiers into Jerusalem. This inflamed the residents and brought them together. Leaders claimed that Antiochus was trying to overthrow the Yahweh priests. They claimed that an altar to Zeus had been constructed in the Temple. Whatever the circumstances, there was a revolt.

It was led by the priestly Hasmonaean family. This family also is called the Maccabees, but Hasmonaean is a more accurate name. Maccabees is an English word taken from the Latin, taken from Aramaic that means "the Hammerer." It probably was a title given to an early Hasmonaean rebel leader named Judas.

A (one-sided) history of the Hasmonaean-Seleucid conflict is found in the two books of Maccabees (which are a part of the Catholic Old Testament but not included in the Hebrew Bible or the Protestant Christian Bible). Both scrolls focus on events in Judea during the revolutionary period from 175 to 135 BCE, but they have different authors. Each has his own perspective. 1 Maccabees generally is a history of events as seen from a Jewish revolutionary perspective. 2 Maccabees looks at the struggle in the context of the Jews' long history as the author understood it. As a note, the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah, (Chanukah) celebrates Judas Maccabeus's victories, especially his rededication of the Jerusalem temple in 165 BCE.[3]

The book of Daniel (found in all Bibles) also is about this Greek-Jewish war period, but many modern readers don't recognize it. They are confused because the author uses a literary form not often encountered today.

The scroll is written as if Daniel, the main character, was living in Babylon about 300 years previously, and he's predicting what will happen in centuries afterwards. It is a way of writing that provides an author with protection from the authorities he is criticizing. Describing the book, Raymond Brown says the writer:

> composed his book from stories about a man named Daniel, who is pictured as having lived in the Babylonian captivity of the sixth century before Christ,

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[3] First Maccabees 4: 52-60

> when the exiled Jews were under the power of Nabuchodonosor [Nebuchadnezzar]....Although he keeps the sixth-century setting of the stories, he is really writing about his own times, the second century. He takes the various sixth-century tyrants...and makes them stand for Antiochus IV. The actions attributed to them are really the actions of Antiochus. For instance, Nabuchodonosor [Nebuchadnezzar] robs the Temple of its vessels, goes mad, and persecutes pious Jews. These were all deeds of Antiochus. Daniel who always outwits the kings and remains faithful to God, is intended by the author to be a symbol of the ultimate triumph of Judaism over the Syrian [Seleucid] persecutors. ("Book of Daniel," *The Catholic Encyclopedia for School and Home*, 1965, Vol. 3, p. 388.)[4]

The uprising--which lasted for 20 years--eventually ended in victory for the Maccabees. Once in power these Hasmonaean kings quickly became Hellenized themselves, but they still relied upon their Temple power base. To satisfy Jerusalem priests, they destroyed the rival Yahweh temple at Samaria, a city north of Jerusalem.[5] They required male circumcision and forbid pork-eating. Sabbath observance became mandatory, and people were forced to make Temple donations (tithes). They also established a calendar that regulated religious observances. Further, they seem to have established a form of the synagogue through which commoners could study the ancient scrolls.

This Hasmonaean state reached maximum size under Alexander Jannaeus who ruled from 103 to 76 BCE. He conquered neighboring areas to the north and east, and briefly ruled over a kingdom that was as large as Solomon's was said to have been. But, he was killed in battle and the kingdom gradually disintegrated.

Civil war came in 67 BCE with Hasmonaean brother fighting Hasmonaean brother. In the midst of the turmoil (63 BCE) the Roman general Pompey marched his troops into Jerusalem. For a time Roman officials worked through the Hasmonaean family. In 40 BCE, though, the Roman Senate made Herod the king. Herod (The Great) was a Hellenized Jew, but he was not a Hasmonaean, and he killed the last of that royal family.

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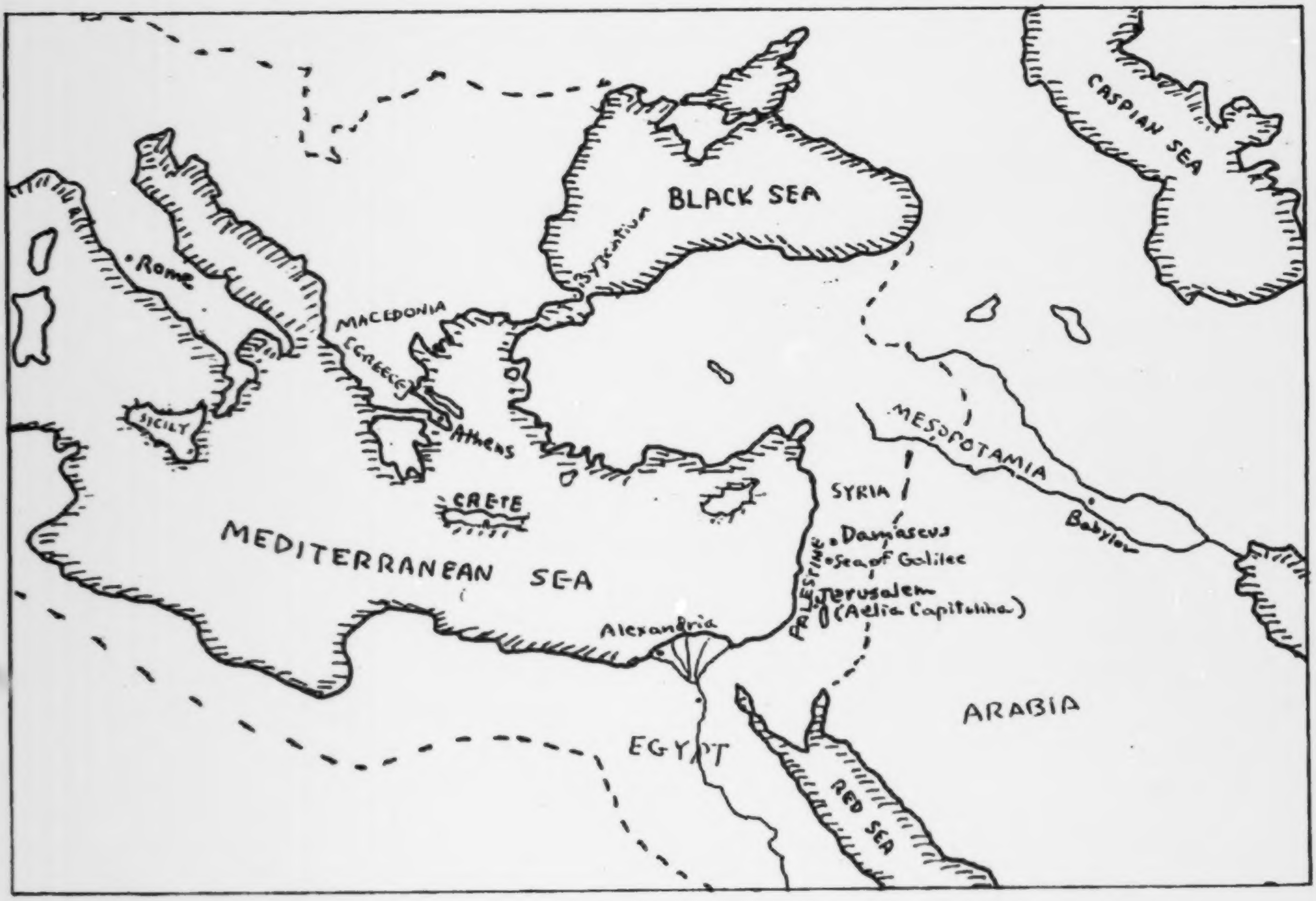
[4] It is also the literary style used in the book of Revelations found in the Christian New Testament.

[5] The temple in the city of Samaria had been destroyed by the Assyrians in the 700s BCE, but it quickly had been rebuilt and had been a center of Judaism since that time. But Samaritan Judaism was different than Jerusalem Judaism. In Samaria only the Torah was used.

By the time Herod the Great became king, all of the Old Testament scrolls had been written, and many other Yahweh-based scrolls existed too. Judaism was splintering into numerous factions. All of the groups claiming to be Jewish accepted the Torah as authoritative. But, they had multiple understandings of it and what being a Jew meant. Each group was producing its own texts that they thought were inspired by Yahweh. This is a focus in the next chapter.



Eastern part of the Roman Empire

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Chapter Nine

Jews, Rome and the World--From 50 BCE On

In 50 BCE Roman authorities were just beginning to directly influence the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea. Two hundred years later (150 CE) the new Roman city of Aelia Capitolina stood on the ruins of old Jerusalem in the Roman province of Palestine. Many Jews still lived in Palestine, but they were forbidden to enter Aelia Capitolina.

How did this happen?

King Herod was a Hellenized Jew, as was stated in the previous lesson. And although it usually is not mentioned in history books, he probably did more to spread Judaism in the Roman world than any other individual. He could do this because he cooperated with Rome. He also used his wealth for building projects in Judea, and he extended his generosity to Jewish communities elsewhere. Finally, his Hellenistic faith demonstrated to intellectuals throughout the Empire that Judaism--with its emphasis on ethics and one God--was also in agreement with Greek philosophy.

Nonetheless, in Judea itself there was backlash. To say the least, many Jewish leaders in Jerusalem did not see Herod in a positive light. They saw him as a puppet of a foreign power. As in times past, there was agitation for a great leader who would save them--a messiah. There was a hope that a new Moses, a new David or a new Judas Maccabeus would arise. They yearned for someone who, with Yahweh's miraculous help, would free them from Rome. They wanted a savior, and there was no shortage of candidates. Time and again leaders arose claiming to be Yahweh's messiah. Time and again these rebels led their followers to destruction.

In *From Jesus to Christ* Fredriksen says:

> ...rebellions continually marked the regimes...installed by Rome after 63 B.C.E., when Hasmonaean rule effectively came to an end. They were ruthlessly put down. Herod the Great...summarily executed one Ezekias the Galilean and "a great number" of his followers...Later he had two religious leaders, Judas and Matthias, burned to death for having incited crowds in Jerusalem...(p. 79. Taken from Josephus)

IN 6 CE, ten years after Herod's death, Judea was put under direct Roman rule after another rebellion. Revolutionary Jews were called Zealots because of their zeal. Within Zealot groups there were individuals who used terrorist tactics. These Zealots were called sacarii, or "dagger men." Sacarii assassinated Roman officials as well as Jewish officials who wanted to cooperate with Rome. After putting down the revolt of 6 CE, Roman authorities crucified 2000 of the Jewish rebels. (Encarta Encyclopedia and Josephus according to Fredriksen, p. 79)

In the early 30s Jesus was crucified, a Roman kind of execution for rebels and others who were thought to be a direct threat.[1] In the 40s the Romans killed Theudas and a large group of followers he was leading to the Jordan River. Like Moses, he claimed that he could "part the waters."

More rioting occurred in Jerusalem about 50 CE, and an unknown number of Jews were killed. A few years later two more rebel leaders were crucified. After this, Romans attacked and disbursed several thousand Jews outside of Jerusalem. Their leader was preparing a march on the city claiming that, on his command, the walls of Jerusalem would fall down.

By 66 CE revolts had became widespread. Lead by Zealots, Jewish rebels killed the Roman troops stationed in Jerusalem and took control of the city. They held it and the surrounding countryside about four years, until 70 CE when they were defeated. In retaliation the Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple. Sacrifices that could only be made in the temple ended. The Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court, also was abolished. (Fredriksen, p.81)

Judea continued to exist in name, but it was under strict Roman control. Jerusalem still existed as a city, but the Temple was gone. Jewish scholars who were still living moved to (what is now) Yavne, a city south of Tel Aviv near the Mediterranean coast.[2]

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[1] Stoning was the Jewish method of execution for religious offenses such as blasphemy--speaking of God in a contemptuous manner. See *From Jesus to Christ*, p. 117.

[2] Only the western wall of the Temple remained standing. Today it is the Wailing Wall sacred shrine where Jews go to lament the destruction of their earlier temples in Jerusalem, but not the one built by Herod. The "Wailing Wall" gets its name from the verbal mourning of devout visitors. Worshipers also write prayers on small pieces of paper and stick them in the wall. Masada is another major shrine stemming from this revolt. The Masada ruins are about 30 miles from Jerusalem on a high bluff overlooking the Dead Sea. After Jerusalem fell in 70 CE, about a thousand people held out at this fortress for another three years.

At this time--after the defeat in 70--one crucial decision made by Jewish scholars was to "close their Bible." From this point on no new materials were added. Henceforth, scribes concentrated on making new scrolls like the old ones. There was no more "editing as you go."

The scrolls that they grouped together, placed in a certain order and "sealed" were those that Jerusalem Temple officials had believed were especially inspired by Yahweh. They were the ones that had been in their Temple library in Jerusalem, or in a special part of it.

It is necessary to make this point because there were numerous Bible-like scrolls that were not included. These were writings by various groups of Jews--often those living outside of Judea--that scholars in Yavne didn't know about, that contained ideas they objected to, or ones which they thought were inferior in other ways. Many of these Bible-like books exist today, and they are grouped in collections called the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. Several rejected books ended up being included in the Christian Old Testament that developed. (See next chapter.)

Having a set Bible served Jews well. In 132 CE there was still another revolt. Emperor Hadrian had issued an order that Jerusalem must be turned into a Roman city. At the same time he outlawed male circumcision, an ancient practice that was central to Jewishness. This revolt (led by Simon Bar Kokhba) succeeded for a couple of years, but in 135 CE it also ended in catastrophe for the Jews. Aelia Capitolina was built, and Jews were forbidden to enter it.[3]

In the end, local Jews were scattered more completely than ever before. Obviously, however, Jews did not "disappear from history." Those who lived in cities outside of Jerusalem may have suffered some persecution, but generally these Jewish communities continued to prosper. (Stark, p. 64) And, Jewish scholars continued their religious thinking and writing. Their struggle to understand the nature of humans' relationship to God remained central to their culture regardless of where they were. They continued to meet in synagogues and produce religious commentaries of many kinds. The best of these were collected in a new "book" called the Talmud--which evolved over the next centuries.

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[3] Although the city was officially renamed, "Jerusalem" remained its commonly-used name. It was illegal for Jews to be in the city for over 500 years, until it was conquered by Muslims in 638. "Although some Jewish pilgrims appear to have visited it, there is no evidence of a Jewish community there between the second and seventh centuries." The city itself acquired a "Christian look" after the time of Constantine. During his time the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built, and Jerusalem became a place of pilgrimage for Christians. (Bernard Wasserstein, "The Politics of Holiness in Jerusalem." *The Chronicle Review*, Sept. 21, 2001, p. B7)

They also preserved the books of the Hebrew Bible essentially in their 100 CE form. Century after century Jewish scribes devoted themselves to faithfully copying the Scripture. The results of their efforts are rather astounding. Recently found manuscripts of books from the Hebrew Bible produced shortly after 130 CE are basically the same as those that Jewish scholars were using more than twelve hundred years later.[4]

Credit for this faithful reproduction after 500 CE goes to Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes.[5] They dedicated themselves to making new copies of Old Testament books that were--consonant letter for consonant letter--exactly like those they were copying from.

They did more than just "copy." The old Hebrew script did not have letters for vowel sounds. So in stages over several centuries the Masoretes developed markings to indicate what vowel sounds should be used when the Scriptures were recited in synagogue worship and study. They closely analyzed the texts they were copying in other ways too. They made marginal notes about unusual words, letters and obscure textual signs that they encountered.

There were two chief locations for this Masoretic preservation work. One was at Tiberias by the Sea of Galilee, and the other was at Babylon in Mesopotamia. The Masoretic traditions in these two locations differed somewhat, but these differences are of little significance (unless one is at a fairly advanced stage of Judaic study). In English-speaking countries, the Tiberias tradition is the one that has prevailed. In general, it is the scrolls from this rabbinical school that Hebrew and Christian scholars used when they translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into common European languages after 1400 CE.

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[4] This reference is to those texts found at Wadi Murabbaat which date from about 135 CE. They are essentially the same as those in existence after 1000 CE. However, there may have been different text variations in other Jewish communities at that time that eventually died out. The Dead Sea Scrolls--which were produced up to 68 CE--demonstrate that text variations existed up to that time.

[5] Masoretic information comes from E. J. Revell writing in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 4, pp. 596-99.

Although incomplete Masoretic texts back to the 800s exist, the most complete and best surviving manuscript dates from 1009.[6] Such Masoretic scrolls provided the basis for the first printed Jewish Bibles. The first editions of these Bibles printed in Hebrew were produced in Venice in 1525. This 1525 Bible continues to be the basis for Jewish Bible texts."[7]

From a cultural standpoint, Jewish and Christian communities remained intertwined for many centuries. Scholars such as Rodney Stark (*The Rise of Christianity*) say it is a mistake to think that Christians and Jews soon saw the other as an enemy. Distinctions between the two faiths probably did not even become clear until the 300s CE. Even afterwards, synagogues and Christian churches physically were very close to one another in many Roman cities. (Stark, p. 68) Some members of an extended family might go to one place of worship while others "crossed the street." Jews and Christians did not systematically "hate" until about 700 CE--a time period that's sometimes called the Dark Ages. However, Christian churches did increase in numbers and power while the Synagogue communities did not.

In 300 CE there were about six million Christians in the Empire, about 10 percent of the population. (Stark, pp. 6-7) Constantine (who ruled the Empire from 306-337 CE) saw the strength and organization of Christianity and gave it state support. He provided State funding and favored treatment. He put Christians in powerful political positions. But why had Christianity grow so much stronger that Judaism? The historian cannot use miraculous explanations such as the idea that Christianity is the "One True Faith." Here's one explanation:

First, being a Jew at that time was more demanding than being a Christian. Being a Jew required male circumcision as well as following rigorous rules related to eating and many other aspects of daily living. However, non-Jews were welcomed in the synagogues, and many came. They were attracted to the high ethics found in Judaism, but they tended to remain on the fringes as admirers of Judaism rather than convert. A Christian could worship the same universal God without the requirements of Judaism. Hellenized Jews also continued to convert for several hundred years.

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[6] It is called the Leningrad Codex. "Best" refers to manuscripts carefully made for scholarly use. These contrast to the ancient "quickly done" ones that were used in individual synagogues.

[7] (Revell, p. 599)The signs used to mark vowels, accents and so forth were probably developed between 500 and 700 CE.

Christianity was more attractive to women. Jewish communities were patriarchal (male-focused). Greece and Roman societies went beyond just being patriarchal. Abortions were encouraged, and baby girls frequently were killed. Early Christians were different.

Among Christians, the abortions--that often resulted in the death of the woman--were forbidden. Christian women also were more likely to have help during child-birth, and no babies were killed. As a consequence, Church communities had a high birthrate and there were more women than men--unlike the situation elsewhere. As a natural consequence, Christian women often married outside of their faith. Fairly frequently their husbands converted. Even if they did not, their children most often were raised in their Christian faith. In addition to (or because of) their abundance, women also achieved high positions within the church.[8]

Finally, loving others was a Christian doctrine, and it had practical effects. Ancient cities were incredibly crowded, dirty and polluted. The causes of infectious disease were unknown, and epidemics frequently swept through ancient Roman cities. There were also occasional plagues.[9]

A common response during times of epidemics and plagues was to flee the cities. Christians more often stayed put and took care of the sick. This simple nursing care by itself enabled larger proportions of Christians to survive. This higher survival rate likely would have seemed miraculous to outsiders. Christians would have appeared to have special supernatural help--which would also have attracted people to their ranks. Thus Christians became increasingly dominant in the Empire while pagans lost power. Jews also cared for the sick, but becoming a Jew was more difficult than becoming a Christian. And, the Jews remained a smaller religious group. (Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, pp. 73-94)

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[8] See Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, pp. 95-128.

[9] As an example, a smallpox plague swept through the Empire between 165 and 180 CE killing millions. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, p. 205. (1997. W. W. Norton & Co.)

Chapter Ten

The Old Testament and Christianity

Christianity was never just one thing. In the first century of the Common Era a variety of Jewish groups came to believe that Jesus was the messiah. But, they had many different ideas about what kind of a savior he was.[1]

Some thought he was a holy spirit sent by Yahweh. Jesus, they reasoned, could never have had a human body because it would involve him in sinful, animal-like bodily functions. They believed he "just appeared to have a fleshly body."[2] Others agreed that a spiritual Jesus had existed from all eternity, but this spirit had entered the body of a real man, Jesus of Nazareth. Some thought the entry came when Jesus was crucified. Others believed the entry came earlier, at Jesus's baptism. As time went on, some pushed entry time back to his birth and then to his conception.

Some thought that Jesus (whoever he was) completed his mission when he arose from the dead and ascended to heaven--thus enabling his followers to also have eternal life. Other Christians believed he needed to come to earth a second time to rule and/or judge the souls of the living and the dead. Some Christians retained ties to their Jewish heritage, and they continued to obey the Torah laws. Others thought the food taboos, male circumcision and the like were unnecessary. At the other extreme, a few groups apparently thought that, since they believed in Jesus, they could live rather wild lives. Because of their belief, he would forgive their sins.

There were Christian groups that had Buddhist-like understandings. They believed in reincarnation. They thought that Jesus was the reincarnation of some great person from the past.[3] Some linked him to Zoroaster, others with Melchizedek. Melchizedek is described in the Bible as living in the time of Abraham, and he is highly praised, especially in the New Testament book of Hebrews. (See Genesis 14:18 and Hebrews, 7: 1-28)

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[1] Jesus was crucified as an anti-Rome revolutionary in about 32 CE. Probably the Romans authorities executed him because they thought he was saying that Yahweh would soon end Rome's rule of Judea. Some messianic Jews were making this kind of claim, but it is unlikely that historians will ever know for sure why the Romans executed Jesus. The earliest accounts of his life that have survived, the New Testament Gospels, were not written until about 40 years after his death. These and the other books in the Christian New Testament contain beliefs *about* Jesus.

[2] This view is called Docetism. See Robert Price, *Deconstructing Jesus*, p. 16.

[3] *Deconstructing Jesus*, Robert Price, p. 26. Buddhism spread in all directions from its origins in India. There were Buddhist missionaries in Alexandria, Egypt, for generations.

These and other Christian groups struggled bitterly with one another for several centuries. No one group emerged supreme until after Constantine became Emperor in 306 CE.

Constantine was a skillful politician who became the leader of an Empire that had been going downhill for several centuries. Securing food had become a problem as farm lands wore out or passed into the hands of the very wealthy. Old mines that once were a source of wealth were no longer productive. Tribal people to the north were a continuing problem as was Persian pressure from the East. The Roman army lost discipline, and divisions warred with one another to gain control of the government.

In hard times people often turn to religion, and in the Roman Empire it was Christianity that benefited. It had grown rapidly in the centuries before Constantine. So, Constantine selected the strongest Christian organization to help him rule, the Church of Rome. Unlike other Christian groups, it had bishops who led congregations in major cities throughout the Empire. They could help Constantine keep order. Once acquired, however, this political power was used eliminate other Christians. Those who had interpretations of Jesus different from the Church of Rome were called "heretics." They had to give up their own understandings of Jesus or face destruction.[4]

We know the Old Testament books that the Roman Church used, but what Hebrew Bible literature did other early Christian groups use?

Many Christians followed a movement led by Marcion who died about 140 CE. He apparently did not accept any part of the Old Testament--did not think it should be a part of Christian Scripture.

> ...Marcion was struck by what he saw as the contrast between the creator-God of the Old Testament, who demands justice and punishes every violation of his law, and the Father whom Jesus proclaims--the New Testament God of forgiveness and love. Why, he asked, would a God who is "almighty"--all-

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[4] See *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* by H. A. Drake (2000. The Johns Hopkins University Press) for an extended analysis. Chapters One and Eleven are especially relevant.

> powerful--create a world that included suffering, pain, disease--even mosquitoes and scorpions? Marcion concluded that these must be two different Gods. (*The Gnostic Gospels*, Elaine Pagels, p. 33)

Others, including Gnostic Christians in Egypt, had Old Testament Bible stories unlike those of the Roman Church. Historians know a little about their literature because one monastery in southern Egypt was able to bury its scrolls before agents from Rome arrived. And, the extreme desert dryness of the area preserved them. They were found in 1945. They are called the Nag Hammadi scrolls, the name of a nearby village. Their story of creation, for example, is very different from the Roman one. In a scroll called "On the Origin of the World," Eve gives life to Adam.

> After the day of rest, Sophia [literally, "wisdom"] sent Zoe [literally, "life"], her daughter, who is called Eve, as an instructor to raise up Adam...When Eve saw Adam cast down, she pitied him, and she said, "Adam, live! Rise up upon the earth!" Immediately her word became a deed. For when Adam rose up, immediately he opened his eyes. When he saw her, he said, "You will be called 'the mother of the living,' because you are the one who gave me life." (Pagels, p. 36)

Other groups probably had their own unique interpretations also, but what they believed about the Old Testament is unknown. Their scriptures were destroyed by authorities associated with the Roman Church or by the ravages of time.

The Old Testament books selected by the Roman Church were the ones in the Hebrew Bible with a few additions. The added books are Tobit (or Tobias), Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach), Baruch and 1 and 2 Maccabees. All of these were written after 200 BCE. The "Book of Wisdom" seems to be the last one to be composed. In places the author claims to be Solomon, but Wisdom was written in Egypt about 100 BCE, and it shows Zoroastrian influence. The author focuses on living a virtuous life and how such a life will be rewarded after death.

As time went by, having a Bible written in Greek proved to be a problem. Christians throughout the Empire now spoke and read Latin, the language of the Romans. As had happened to the Jews centuries before, fewer and fewer leaders could read their own scriptures. As a consequence, the Christian Bible was translated into Latin.

> ...an "Old Latin" translation of the Bible, made directly from the Greek by persons unknown, came into use as Scripture by the Latin-speaking Churches....By the middle of the fourth century [300s CE] several variants were in circulation and the overall corruption of the text had become intolerable to church authorities. About 382 A.D. Pope Damascus therefore invited Eusebius Hieronymus (afterward known as St. Jerome) to revise it. (*Wide as the Waters*, Benson Bobrick, p. 14)

Jerome completed his work in 405 CE. At first his Latin Bible was scorned, but in time it became honored and then hallowed. By the early 600s it was called the "common version," or *Vulgate*. From then on it was used throughout Christian Europe for a thousand years. During this time the hand-copied books of the Old Testament (along with the New Testament) were not available to most Christians.

As Roman Catholicism developed, Church leaders, were seen as God's earthly representatives. The Bible was Yahweh-inspired, but it was viewed as a church creation for church authorities to use as they saw fit.

> In Church teaching it was axiomatic that Christ had given the Scriptures to the clergy. They might use it to "sweetly minister to the laity and weaker persons," but it was not for general consumption. Few common people could read anyway. But if they did, letting them read the Bible would mean that the "the jewel of clerics" would be "trodden underfoot by the swine." (Bobrick, pp. 50-51)

This view eventually was successfully challenged. An essential part of the Protestant Reformation was the belief that the Bible--not the Pope or other church officials--was the ultimate guide for knowing God's will. The Bible should be made available to all Christians.

One of the first tasks of the Protestant reformers, therefore, was to translate the Bible into their people's everyday language. Martin Luther helped lead the way with his German translations of the New and Old Testaments. His Old Testament was published in 1532, and it had only those Old Testament books that the Jews of the First Century had accepted. He rejected the extra ones in the Vulgate. Other Protestant reformers followed, including those who eventually produced the English language version completed during King James's reign.[5]

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[5] Reformation leaders were greatly aided by new printing technologies that had become available during the previous century. Materials made by presses with movable type were being produced by 1457, and Gutenberg's printed Vulgate Bible followed. It was in Latin that few common people could read.

At the beginning of the Reformation, Catholic leaders tried to prevent the distribution of Bibles. Before he broke with the Roman Church, Henry VIII tried almost desperately to prevent English language Bibles from being distributed to his subjects. Any unauthorized person caught reading the Bible was arrested and punished! The campaign was not successful, and Roman Catholics then produced their own translation. Their version kept all of the books in the Vulgate. Therefore, Catholic and Protestant Bibles continue to have Old Testaments that are somewhat different.

As Bibles were widely distributed and read, there was an "explosion" of new Christian sects. Given an opportunity to read the Bible for themselves, hundreds of new Christian groups formed. The process continues today.

In a broad sense, reasons for these divisions are similar to the reasons for divisions nearly 2000 years ago. Now as then some Jews and Christians read the Bible in a very literal way, as if it were a history book. Others analyze the Old Testament in a Hellenistic-like manner. Still others use it to foretell the future. In addition, the mass of diverse religious views found in the Bible provide independent-thinking religious people with multiple opportunities to find new twists on particular verses. They can then try to convince others that their new understanding of the Bible is the "true one." If successful, they may establish yet another sect.

Parts of the Old Testament continue to create controversy just as they did when Marcion and Jewish Christians of the Second Century wanted the Hebrew Bible kept out of Christian Scripture. Numbers provides an example of their kind of thinking. In a war situation Yahweh is presented as issuing this command to Israelite leaders:

> "Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by laying with him. But all the young girls who have not known man by laying with him, keep alive for yourselves." (Numbers 31:17-18)

Yahweh's apparent demand that enemy baby boys and married women be slaughtered; that young women be forcibly married or raped was something that wasn't acceptable in times of newer moral values. So, non-literal explanations for the Scripture of Jews and Christians have come into being. Such passages clearly show that religious ideas change over time.

An understanding of the history of the Old Testament and how it changed through the centuries can provide help to those reading it. History can provide some understanding of the world in which the Israelites lived when a "Godly" command such as the one quoted above was acceptable. The story also can be looked upon as expressing wartime emotions--which people even today try to control.

Taken as a whole, the Hebrew Bible is an extremely long-enduring attempt by Jews and Christians to understand themselves and the universe of which they are a part. People who are not Jews or Christians can profitably study the Old Testament because, in the Western World, it has been instrumental in forming a perspective that often governs people's thinking, speaking and writing.

Chapter Eleven

The Jewish and Christian Canons

Numbering Bible books. The Hebrew Bible has 24 books. The Christian Protestant Bible has the same material, but the book numbering and organization are different. Both have the Torah (the first 5 books) as well as the Joshua, Judges, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther and Daniel--for a total of 19 books that have the same organization. Others are divided differently.

In the Hebrew Bible, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are lumped together. Collectively they are called the "Minor Prophets" because they are short manuscripts, and traditionally they were on one scroll.[1] Each of these is listed separately in the Bible used by Protestant churches. The Hebrew Bible at this point has 20 books, and the Protestant Bible has 31.

"Ezra and Nehemiah" are combined in the Hebrew Bible, but they are separated in the Protestant Bible. The count now is 21 books in the Hebrew Bible and 33 in the Protestant one.[2]

Finally, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are divided into parts "1" and "2" in the Protestant Bible but are not separated in the Hebrew Bible.[3] Thus, the Hebrew Bible ends with 24 books and the Protestant Bible with 39.

The Catholic Bible has 46 books; the 39 books described above plus seven additional ones. These are Tobit and Judith (coming after Jeremiah), Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus (after the Song of Solomon), Baruch (after Lamentations) and 1 and 2 Maccabees at the end of the Catholic Old Testament. All were written after 200 BCE regardless of their placement, historical settings or subject matter. With the exception of Esther and Daniel, they were composed later than the others in the Old Testament.

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[1] Some of the oldest material in the Bible is found in them.

[2] Some Jewish Bibles began separating the two books in the late Middle Ages.

[3] The divisions apparently related to the amount of material that commonly could be put on one scroll.

Canonization of the Hebrew Bible. Strictly speaking there is no Jewish canon. Canonization as used here means the time at which the Hebrew Bible scrolls--taken as a unit--were recognized as being Holy.[4] It's the time beyond which no new scrolls were added and, secondly, when existing ones were not changed. Canonization means that priestly scribes no longer edited as they copied. In short, by 100 CE the Hebrew Bible existed as a united Scripture. As a body of literature it was "closed."[5]

Closing the Hebrew Bible about 100 CE is understandable. Jerusalem and its Temple had been destroyed. Jews were scattered, and the goal was to preserve their religious inheritance.[6] After this time scholars kept writing new materials, but they also faithfully reproduced the old scrolls word-for-word. They did this exact copying generation after generation for over 1000 years, until printing was invented in the 1400s.[7]

The 100 CE date is deceptive, however. Jews divide their Bible into three sections. There is The Law, The Prophets and Other Writings.

By 100 CE The Law generally had been considered sacred for centuries. "The Law" is the 5 books of the Torah which means "instruction" or "guidance." It probably was approaching canon status by 400 BCE. "The Prophets" consists of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve "Minor Prophets." Except for Isaiah, all were becoming standardized by 300 BCE.[8] Thus, 12 of the 24 books in the Hebrew Bible were, for the most part, held Sacred for about 400 years before the 100 CE date.

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[4] In a physical sense they remained as scrolls or as codex (books) written on parchment until about the time of the Protestant Reformation.

[5] However, since they are all believed to be inspired by Yahweh, the universal God, many Jews and Christians believe that verses from a book can be lifted out of context and read as "things in themselves." Further, verse fragments from different books "logically" can be fitted together regardless of their historical context or why they were written. As one can imagine, this use of Bible passages opens up the possibility of almost unending new interpretations of Yahweh's "commands."

[6] Jewish leaders meeting at Jabneh about 100 CE made this ruling, and within a couple of generations their decision was accepted by most Jewish groups. However, there were influential rabbinical scholars who refused to accept such books as Esther and Daniel for another hundred years. On the other hand, it is possible that Jews in Alexandria at this time (100 CE) considered some or all of the "extra" books that were put in the Catholic Bible to be sacred. (Sarna, p. 783)

[7] The evidence of faithful copying is solid. The very first *printed* Bibles in Hebrew appeared about 1480. The oldest hand-copied texts still existing were produced about 900 CE. Over this 600 year there were no significant differences in the texts! Some scribal errors can be found but no purposeful editing such as existed during and after the Persian era . The kinds of errors found relate to similar-looking letters being switched, or the order of two letters reversed. Or, a letter or word is left out. Or, a scribe's eye slipped to the next line, and a series of words is missing. (Sarna, p. 789)

All of the third-category “Other Writings” were newer ones. They were written during Greek times or later, except for Psalms. Psalms, like Isaiah, contains some of the oldest material in the Bible, but--again like Isaiah--scrolls with somewhat different texts continued to be circulated.[9]

Canonization of the Christian Old Testament. The canon came from the Council of Laodicea in 360 CE. As we have seen, many different kinds of Christianity existed during the first century CE. One group even thought that Yahweh was a different god than the Christian God. But there were later disputes among Roman Catholic scholars too. They agreed that “The Law” and “The Prophets” were Holy. “The Law and the Prophets” are referred to repeatedly in the New Testament. However, church leaders had difficulty determining the status of other literature.

As examples, one Bible codex of 350 CE includes First Esdras.[10] First Esdras is a Greek text that restates parts of Ezra, Nehemiah and 2 Chronicles, and it also has a few verses not found in any of these books.

In the 600s some Syrian churches made 3 and 4 Maccabees a part of their Bible as well as some of Josephus’s writings on *The Jewish War.* These two Maccabees books are not the ones that are in the Catholic Bible. They were written by Hellenistic Jews living in Alexandria about the time of Jesus. One book is on the life of Jews in Alexandria under Greek rule, and the other is much like the book of Wisdom. It exults Reason which is pictured as being God-like. Both are concerned with the persecution of Jews in various ages. Josephus was a Hellenized Jewish historian who lived from the 30s CE to after 100 CE. He opposed the war with Rome (67-70), and he makes his opposition clear in his writings. Apparently some Syrian church leaders considered the last of his seven books on The Jewish War to be Sacred. (Sarna, p. 784)

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[8] Evidence for this date relates to the substance of these books, including the reliable history included in them and the lack of “Grecisms” in them. (Sarna, p. 783) However, other authorities say The Prophets was “fluid” until until much later. Georgi Dieter states that even in the first century CE a “definite canon of holy scriptures outside the Torah...did not yet exist in any exclusive sense. There were a great number of writings that various [Jewish] groups considered Holy, but they differed among different people.” (The Early Church,” *Harvard Theological Review,* p. 6)

[9] An almost complete Dead Sea scroll of Isaiah is quite different from the one in the Bible. So is a scroll of Psalms. (Sarna p. 783) But, it is unknown if Qumran sect members had edited these texts themselves or if different forms of the Isaiah and Psalms scrolls were in general circulation. (Sarna, p. 783)

[10] A codex is an early kind of book. Parchment sheets were stacked and tied with leather thongs. Esdras (1 and 2) are included in the King James Version's Apocrypha.

On the other hand, one early Christian leader (Origin, 185 to 254 CE) stated specifically that only 22 Jewish scrolls were Sacred, but it is not known which ones he refused to accept. Jerome (who translated the Bible into Latin) wanted the Old Testament to include only those books in the Hebrew Bible, but he was overruled. (Sarna, p. 784)

Bible Translations: Although the Roman Church's Vulgate Bible was in Latin, the Septuagint Greek Old Testament continued to used in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. To understand, one needs to return to Emperor Constantine in the early 300s CE. He had divided his Empire for administrative purposes, making Constantinople (now Istanbul) his eastern capital. The western part of the Empire (centered in Italy) gradually fell apart after 450 CE, but the Church in the area remained strong. In the east, the Empire's government did not decay. It continued to exist for another 1,000 years. Gradually it became known as the Byzantine Empire. The Christian church remained linked to it, and was called the Orthodox Church.

These two major branches of the Christian church–Roman and Orthodox--gradually drifted apart, and they finally split altogether shortly after 1000 CE. Orthodox leaders did not accept the leadership of the Church in Rome, and they didn't use Latin. They kept their Greek Septuagint Bible translation, and it was this Bible that Byzantine scribes copied century after century. It was this Bible that Orthodox missionaries took with them to lands--such as Russia--that they converted to Christianity.

When Muslim invaders conquered Constantinople in 1451, many Orthodox Christian scholars fled west bringing their Greek Bibles with them. College departments of Greek (and Hebrew) emerged in French universities and then in England. During the Protestant Reformation translators such as Luther used these Greek texts when translating the New Testament. He used Jewish Hebrew manuscripts for translating the Old Testament.

Since Luther was protesting against Catholic Church abuses and working from Hebrew texts when translating the Old Testament, it's not surprising that he didn't include the "extra" seven books of the Catholic Bible. Other Protestant leaders followed his lead.[11]

Roman Catholic leaders responded by reaffirming their canon. Meeting in the Council of Trent in 1546, they stated bluntly that all of the books in the Vulgate were equally Sacred. So, the division in Bibles has remained. Catholic and Orthodox Bibles today are different from Protestant ones.

Translation Effects and Bible Divisions. Language standardization has been one effect of the explosion of Bible reading that resulted from inexpensive, printed Bibles written in languages that people could understand.

Luther was largely responsible for creating a common German language, and The King James Bible of 1611 was instrumental in developing "the King's English." Its Old and New Testaments are still used by many English-speaking Protestants. In addition, there are now many newer Bible translations. These make use of ancient Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and other manuscripts that were not known during Reformation times. Also, some Bible translations today use popular kinds of language--like those found in newspapers, magazines and widely-read books.

Today's Bibles almost always are divided into chapters, paragraphs, and verses. The paragraph-like divisions go back to the time of Philo and Jesus, and the chapter and verse divisions come from the Middle Ages.

Dividing the books into chapters first occurred in hand-copied Vulgate Bibles produced in the 1200s CE at the University of Paris. Stephen Langton, later the Archbishop of Canterbury, is given credit for this innovation. His chapter divisions were used in Hebrew Bibles in the 1300s and in Bibles thereafter. Bible chapters do not necessarily correspond to natural text divisions, however, and they sometimes tend to make Bible understanding difficult.

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[11] Luther placed the Catholic books in an "Apocrypha" section that he put between the Old and New Testaments. The King James Version published in 1611 also has an "Apocrypha." Newer Protestant Bible translations may or may not include an Apocrypha with those books.

Dividing a chapter into verses came in the 1500s. Robert Stephanus, an early Bible printer in Paris, assigned numbers to division symbols used in Hebrew Bibles for a thousand years. The ancient dividing signs were devised when most Jews no longer understood Hebrew. So, about 200 CE rabbis began reading a short section of Scripture in Hebrew, stopped and then translated the passage they had read. The short reading sections became standardized, and they were noted with a mark that looks like a colon (:). Numbering the marks consecutively in a chapter made referencing easy, but these verse divisions have little relationship to meaning. Sometimes they do not even correspond to sentences. Thus, verses often are not helpful when trying to determine the meaning of a Bible passage.

The Influence of the Bible. Bible literature is a foundation of Western art. Much classical music was inspired by it. Think of the cathedrals in Europe as well as the biblical-based sculpture and painting found in museums around the world. Over the centuries Western authors have assumed that their readers will have a working knowledge of biblical stories. Modern artistic and literary forms are not so closely tied to the Bible, but biblical themes remain frequent. "Joseph and His Magnificent Technicolor Dreamcoat" is one recent example of a Bible-inspired stage play.

The spiritual lives of Jews and Christians are directly based upon Bible concepts, but other people's basic understandings of human life have been deeply influenced too. Many core Western values have foundations in the Hebrew Bible (and the Christian and Islamic faiths that evolved out of it). The importance of earthly life is one of these values--as is the related belief in the essential worth of each person. However, it is incorrect to equate moral behavior with acceptance of the divine nature of any particular holy book. A person's religious beliefs (if any) are only one factor among many that determine how he or she will (and should) act.

Chapter Twelve

The Old Testament and the Koran

In the early 600s CE, Jerusalem and surrounding areas were a part of the East Roman, or Byzantine, Empire. Orthodox Christianity was the state religion, and Constantinople (now Istanbul) was the capital. In 634 CE its army was defeated near Jerusalem by southern desert warriors united by a Jewish-like faith. They claimed the area was their "Promised Land."[1]

Muhammad had been the organizer and leader of this desert army. He had died two years previously, but during the previous 20 years he had used religion and booty to unite his followers and mold them into a potent military force. This religious/military force endured. Within 200 years the invaders' descendants and converts would be called Muslims–meaning "those who surrender" (to Allah).[2] Muhammad would be honored as their greatest prophet, and the Koran would be their holy book.

Allah was the Islamic name for God, and it comes from the Hebrew Bible. *Yahweh* (in English) is most commonly used in the Hebrew Bible, but *Eloah* and *Elohim* are found also. Allah is a variation of these words for God.[3]

Muslims believe that the Koran embodies the literal words of Allah as revealed in Arabic to Muhammad. These revelations, it's believed, came to him periodically during the last 23 years of his life. Muhammad was illiterate, however, and he communicated the "words of Allah" verbally to colleagues. These oral traditions eventually were written down, gathered together and--by 800 CE--the Koran existed almost in its present form.

The Koran is book-length, and it's divided into 114 chapter-like *surahs*. Generally these are arranged according to length--from the longest (about 27 pages) to the shortest ones at the end. These have only a few lines. The creed-like first surah is an exception. It reads as follows--as translated by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall in *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*.

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[1] Ibn Warraq, ed. *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book*. 1998. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, pp. 9-35.

[2] To be a " 'slave of God,' is the proudest rank the Muslim can claim." Pickthall, p. 379.

[3] Allah also is the name for God used by Arabic-speaking Christians, not just Muslims.

(All of the quotes from the Koran are from this source. Pickthall tries to provide his translation with a flavor of the classic Arabic language by using the kind of English found in the King James Version of the Bible.)

> 1. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,
> 2. The Beneficent, the Merciful,
> 3. Owner of the Day of Judgment,
> 4. Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help.
> 5. Show us the straight path,
> 6 The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;
> 7. Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

The Koran is linked to the Hebrew Bible in a number of ways. Muhammad considered himself to be a prophet in the Old Testament tradition.

A direct link between the Arabs and Israelites is established through the biblical story of Abraham, Hagar (the family slave) and their son, Ishmael. In the Bible, Abraham's wife, Sarah grew old without becoming a mother. Her childlessness created inheritance problems. So, a family decision was made for Abraham and Hagar to have a child. All went well for more than 10 years. Then, in her very old age, the Bible states that Sarah became pregnant, and she had a son named Isaac. Sarah now demanded that Hagar and Ishmael leave the family.

> But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." So Abraham...sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. (Genesis 21:9-14 RSV)

In the Koran, Ishmael somehow reached Mecca, and Abraham joined him there. Together, father and son--Abraham and Ishmael--built the Kabah, the most sacred shrine of Islam.

> And when We [Allah] made the House (at Mecca) a resort for mankind and a sanctuary, (saying): Take as your place of worship the place where Abraham stood (to pray), And We imposed a duty upon Abraham and Ishmael, (saying) Purify My house for those who go around and those who mediate therein and those who bow down and prostrate themselves (in worship)....And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, (Abraham prayed): Our Lord Accept from us (this duty). (surah 2: 125-127)

Moses also figures prominently in the Koran, especially as he leads the Israelites out of Egypt. The parallels with the Bible are quite direct.

From Exodus:

> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen...Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." So Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea....The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not so much as one of them remained. (Exodus 14: 21-28 RSV)

Here is a similar account from the Koran. There are several.

> Then We inspired Moses, saying: Smite the sea with thy staff. And it parted, and each part was as a mountain vast. Then brought We near the others to that place. And We saved Moses and those with him, every one; We drowned the others. (26: 63-66)

Links between Bible personalities and the Koran continue. Six surahs have names that come directly from the Hebrew Bible. These are "Jonah" (surah 10), "Joseph" (12), "Abraham" (14), "The Children of Israel" (17), "The Prophets" (21), and "Noah" (71). Surah 2 alone mentions Solomon, Jacob, Isaac, Ishmael, Saul, Aaron, Goliath, and David. Most of these biblical references are brief. They are used to illustrate a rule or belief. The Koranic writers assume readers already know the Old Testament stories.

In general, the Koran is militant, like Exodus, Joshua, Judges and 1 Samuel. God (Yahweh/Allah) is pictured as a cosmic warrior helping his followers win earthly battles. This help is provided in exchange for obeying God's commandments. After giving Moses a lengthy list of specific commands for daily living in Exodus, Yahweh is presented as saying:

> "When my angel goes before you, and brings you to the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, you shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces....I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you...(Exodus 23: 23-27 RSV)

Allah acts in a similar manner in the Koran:

> "O ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty (unto Him). (9:123)

Muslims also learn that when they kill non-believers in battle, it is really Allah who is killing them--since Allah is all-powerful. (8:17) And in wars against non-believers (infidels), Muslim soldiers are told that they will spend eternity in hell if they retreat. Infidels are said to be the "worst of beasts." (8: 16 & 55)

Neither book has much to say about peace among nations. Middle Eastern people lived in theocracies when they were written. Governments were tied to religions that claimed universality. Jews thought their beliefs alone were from God when Leviticus was written. Much later, Christians and Muslims made similar claims.

Throughout the Koran, life in this world is described as being a testing period pointing toward an end-of-time judgment day. At that moment, the dead will come out of their graves. (surah 4:36) The sky will be torn apart as Allah's angels--descending from heaven--come to weigh the actions and thoughts of all people. God-fearing Muslims then cross a bridge to paradise. Non-believers and evil-doers are doomed. They go to an eternal fiery hell. References to a fiery hell are found throughout the Koran. Surah 22:19-23 is one of the most vivid.

These beliefs are like those of centuries earlier Zoroastrianism. This was the Persian religion to which some Hebrews were exposed beginning with the Babylonian Captivity period. Little by little, Zoroastrian concepts of the afterlife began to replace the ancient Israelite idea of sheol--where all human souls went regardless of their body's earthly behavior. Zoroastrian (paradise or hell) concepts are found in several late-written passages in the Hebrew Bible. One that's in Daniel provides an example:

> ..And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:1-2)

Multiple verses in the Koran say much the same thing, but the imagery is more vivid.

> On that day (many) faces will be downcast,
> Toiling, weary
> Scorched by burning fire,
> Drinking from a boiling spring,
> No food for them save bitter thorn-fruit
> Which doth not nourish nor release from hunger.
> In that day other faces will be calm,
> Glad for their effort past,
> In a high garden
> Where they hear no idle speech,
> Wherein is a gushing spring,
> Wherein are couches raised
> And goblets set at hand
> And cushions ranged
> And silken carpets spread (88: 2-16)

In surah 19:61 there is a specific comparison between paradise and the biblical Garden of Eden. Other descriptions in the Koran stress the servants and companions (male and female) that a person will have in paradise.

In many fundamental ways the Koran carries the same message as does the Hebrew Bible. God is one and universal. There are no other Gods, and Allah has no children. God has communicated his will to humans through chosen individuals, or prophets. These prophets are those of the Hebrew Bible plus Jesus[4] and Muhammad. After death, people's bodies are resurrected, a very late idea in the Hebrew Bible. Following judgment, people are eternally rewarded for obedience or punished for disobedience.

As in the Hebrew Bible, the Koran has multiple rules for human living. These involve diet, conflicts among believers, maintaining modesty, acceptable sexual partners and rules for divorce. They concern the care of children, widows, parents and the needy. They provide guidelines for inheritance, dealing with slaves and other matters. Most of these rules are similar to common Middle Eastern practices at the time that Muhammad lived. Punishments are perhaps somewhat less severe than those in such Old Testament books as Leviticus--which were written about a thousand years previously.

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[4] Jesus is referred to from time to time in the Koran, but as a prophet, not a savior. "The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger..." (5:75) In one verse, Jesus is presented as predicting a "messenger who cometh after me ," presumably Muhammad. (61:6)

For example, in Leviticus adulterous women are stoned to death. In the Koran, they are whipped but not stoned. (Most of the extremely harsh punishments associated with Islamic law are from sources other than the Koran.) Overall, the Koran does not degrade women given the historical time in which it was written. Women have some property rights, for example. Gender equality, however, is an extremely recent concept even in the Western world. The Koranic writers operated at a much lower level. One chief concern was trying to prevent children--especially baby girls--from being killed. "Slay not your children, fearing a fall to poverty. We shall provide for them and for you. Lo! the slaying of them is a great sin." (17:31)

Conclusion: A brilliant civilization developed in Islamic lands in the 400 years after the Koran emerged (800-1200 CE). It was a golden age. Lands from Spain and north Africa to western China were united. Ideas flowed as freely as commerce. Muslim scholars preserved ancient Greek learning (Aristotle and others), and they themselves made notable contributions in a number of fields. In essence, Muslim scholars provided one foundation of modern science.

Today Muslims interpret the Koran in a variety of ways. Ghulam-Haider Aasi, a professor at the American Islamic College in Chicago, says that the range of Muslim beliefs is as extensive as those in any other world religion. They go from "Puritanical Revivalism" to beliefs that are compatible with science.[5] This generalization likely is correct, but at the present time the "Puritanical Revivalism" element in Islam outside the U.S. is large, much greater than in Judaism and Christianity. That is, a larger percentage of Muslims interpret their religion in a fundamentalist manner. Fewer ordinary Muslims have merged their faith with scientific and secular historical concepts (such as are found in these lessons). Dealing with this situation, Aasi said, will be a hard but necessary task for Muslims.

In addition to working with peace-oriented groups within the Islamic faith, Aasi said non-Muslims should look at the political and economic aspects of the problem of Islamic terrorism. In his judgment, these issues must be successfully addressed if the puritanical unrest in the Islamic world is to be defused. This is a viewpoint shared by many world leaders.

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[5] "Understanding Islam," A lecture by Aasi in a series on "Fundamentalism," Nov., 2001, Riverside, Il.

Chapter Thirteen

Summary and Conclusions

We have traced the Hebrew Bible from its origins in the oral traditions of Middle Eastern people to its impact on life today.

The Israelite culture first entered the historical record about 1200 BCE when an Egyptian Pharaoh made a brief note of the existence of such a group living in the Canaan highlands. Archaeological evidence of a distinctive Israelite culture comes later, around 1000 BCE after the first round of city states in the Levant had been destroyed.

When they become archaeologically identifiable, the Israelites lived in villages and small towns. They had no cities or writing. There is no evidence that their religious beliefs differed significantly from those of surrounding groups. Cultural groups in the Levant--including the Israelites--worshiped one chief deity and a variety of other gods. They continued to do so for hundreds of years.

The Israelites--who are also known as Hebrews and who later became the Jews--began developing cities along with associated cultural changes in the 800s BCE. Their first city most likely was Samaria, and writing was one of the "associated changes" that came with city development.

Although word-symbol writing had been used in the Middle East for more than 2000 years, the sound-symbol writing that the Israelites adopted was a newer development. The word *phonics* comes from the Phoenicians, an Israelite neighbor in the Levant. The Phoenicians are commonly given credit for developing the sound-symbol writing system, and it was copied by the Israelites and other cultures. It may be that the first written forms of the Hebrew Bible were produced in the Kingdom of Israel, but this is conjecture. Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BCE, and its own written records (if they existed) were destroyed.

A Hebrew-speaking town just to the south of Israel's border was not attacked by the Assyrians. This town was Jerusalem, and after 722 BCE it rapidly grew to city status. It became the capital of a small Assyrian-vassal state called Judah. It probably was in Judah after 722 BCE that some of the oral historical traditions that we know as the Hebrew Bible were first put in written form, possibly using documents from Israel that escaping priests had brought with them in 722 BCE. However, many Bible scholars think the first biblical writing came later--after the Babylonian Captivity period.

In the 600s BCE Judah's kings alternated between working with Assyria as a vassal state and trying to rebel. Somehow the Hebrews living in their city of Jerusalem managed to survive to about 570 BCE when the kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Chaldeans from Mesopotamia. The Chaldeans--or Babylonians as they are more commonly called--took a number of Judahite leaders back to their capital of Babylon in what is known as the Babylonian Captivity period. This period was relatively brief since the Babylonians themselves were conquered by the Persians who allowed--even encouraged--the captives to return and rebuild Jerusalem. The city became the center of a Persian province called Yehud (a name, which along with Judah and Judea, evolved into the word *Jews*).

Much of the Hebrew Bible is a product of Jewish work during the 200 years that they were ruled by the Persians. Even the Torah--the first five books of the Bible--reflects this time period. The Middle Eastern world as depicted in the Torah corresponds to the world at the time of the Persians. The many rules for the Jewish priesthood in Leviticus relate to the duties and responsibilities of priests during Persian times, not at some previous era.

It is an open question when the biblical stories of the Jewish people begin to include actual history. Jewish temple scholar-priests working in Jerusalem under Persian overlords probably thought they were writing the actual history of their people from the time of creation onward. However, only Jewish, Christian and Islamic Fundamentalists who are biblical literalists hold this view today.

David is the first biblical personality for which there is any evidence outside of the Bible, and it comes from about 200 years after his biblical time. Scholars such as Finkelstein and Silberman say the archaeological evidence indicates that there could not have been a united kingdom under

David and Solomon such as is described in the Bible. They say David and Solomon probably were actual people, but they would have been tribal chiefs ruling over a small section of very rugged rural hill country.

Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in 322 BCE, and the Jews were ruled by Greek kings for about 150 years thereafter. During this Hellenic period, Jewish thought was transformed more completely into a monotheistic religion. That is, Jewish scholars began systematically seeing Yahweh as a universal God instead of a Hebrew god who was in competition with all of their neighbors' gods.

In the process of making this transition the Hellenized Jews began interpreting their ancient stories as allegories--much as the Greeks interpreted theirs. These stories, they believed, were important because they illustrated moral and religious truths. They were not meant to be interpreted in a literal way. Other Jews rejected this Hellenization.

Regardless, a major problem is created when the idea of a universal God is accepted. How does one explain evil in the world without believing in a God who does evil? One solution is to assume that an anti-god, devil or Satan is allowed to exist for a time, and he is the source of evil. People are "free" to do evil or good, and all will be punished or rewarded in an afterlife. Instead of all souls going to one place upon death (sheol or hades), the afterlife is divided into realms which we know today as heaven and hell. This was a Persian Zoroastrian solution that many Jews gradually incorporated into their own faith. Other Jews rejected these Zoroastrian concepts, and this division within Judaism remains today.

The Romans gained control of Jerusalem and surrounding territories in the century before Jesus lived. And, they maintained their control for centuries. Under the Romans, Judaism expanded into cities throughout the empire at the same time that it splintered into many competing groups.

Some of these groups developed the idea that Yahweh would help Jews become free from Roman control--would provide them with a messiah. Some thought this messiah would be an earthly warrior with special powers. Others thought in terms of an angelic leader from heaven. Many Jewish rebel leaders (and deluded people) claimed to be this messiah.

Relying upon Yahweh's help in one way or another, some Jewish groups rebelled in 66 CE, and within a few years they were crushed. After this defeat, the idea gained ground that perhaps the freedom for which certain Jews yearned would not come in this life but in the life hereafter. One story that had been circulating for a number of years related to a peasant leader named Jesus. He'd been crucified by the Romans, and there were Jews who thought he had arisen from the dead. By rising from the dead and returning to God, they believed he made freedom--interpreted as everlasting life in heaven--available to everyone.[1]

In the extremely hard times following the unsuccessful revolt of the 60s--and another one in the 130s--the idea that Yahweh had indeed sent a savior to the world gained ground. More and more Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) throughout the empire began accepting the idea that the universal God had sent a savior into the world who--through his suffering and death--had indeed provided a heaven for people after death. They accepted the idea "...that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

These Jesus-believers continued to grow in number. Eventually they moved away from their Jewish roots and developed their own holy book, the New Testament. In such manner a new religion--the Christian religion--emerged. In the 300s the Roman Emperor Constantine gave favored support to one form of Christianity, and from that point on it became dominant.

This dominant group of Christians kept the Hebrew Bible as Scripture, perhaps because it was helpful in converting Jews. Jewish scholars had translated their Bible into Greek under the Seleucids, after Alexander the Great captured the area. This Greek Septuagint Bible continued to be the Old Testament that was used by Christians in the eastern part of the Roman empire that was ruled from Constantinople. This Byzantine part of the Roman Empire survived well into the 1400s. In Rome and the western part of the Empire Latin was the common language, and here a Latin version of the Bible was used. Following earlier translations, the

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[1] The number of Jews who accepted Jesus as their savior in 66 CE was very small. Rodney Stark estimates that there would have been 1,000 Jesus-followers in 40 CE and less that 8,000 in 100 CE. (*The Rise of Christianity*, pp. 507)

Vulgate became the Bible that was used in the Roman Catholic Church for 1,000 years. During the Protestant Reformation beginning about 1500, it was translated into many European languages.

National states were beginning to emerge. Having a Bible written in the dominant language helped foster a sense of nationalism. In England, the King James version of the Bible was instrumental in standardizing English and providing England's people with a sense of oneness. Many common English Language expressions used today come out of the King James Bible.

The multiple Bible translations also encouraged reading, and the literacy rate rose dramatically. The cause and effect relationships are quite complex, but many people apparently learned to read so they could study the Bible for themselves.

Because people believed that the Bible contained the word of God and they now could read it for themselves, there was a huge increase in the number of interpretations of the Old (and New) Testaments. This diversity is especially pronounced in Christianity. When any verse from any book of the Hebrew Bible can be combined with those from other books, the possible understandings are virtually endless. Viewed broadly, the range of interpretations today are similar to what they were in Hellenistic times. They relate to literal readings vs. kinds of allegorical interpretations.

Islam also builds upon the Hebrew Bible. *Allah* is a variation of Elohim, a biblical word for God. The monotheism that Hebrew Bible editors and writers developed following the Babylonian Captivity is central to the Koran and the Islamic faith. So also is the concept of an afterlife in paradise or hell following an end-of-the-world judgment day. These ideas were beginning to enter Jewish thought during the Persian period.

When enunciating these ideas, the Koranic writers assume that Muslims will know Hebrew Bible stories, especially those found in the Torah. The Koran has multiple references to Adam, Noah, Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph and especially to Moses. These are cited as examples of "men of old" who believed that Allah (or Elohim) is the One True God.

Thus, there are three "Abrahamic" world religions built upon the Torah and other parts of the Hebrew Bible--Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Having roots in a common body of religious literature does not mean that peaceful relations exist between or among the followers of the Abrahamic faiths. Quite the opposite often is the case. Although Yahweh (or Allah) evolved into a universal deity, people often have continued to act as if their God still is an old "tribal" one. They think that the one God of the cosmos is on their side in their battles with others.

And, there's a problem concerning the specific guidelines for human behavior found in the Hebrew Bible. Concepts of acceptable behavior evolve over time, but written codes remain static, and a disconnect develops. Slavery was widely accepted when the Bible was written, for example, and men were considered superior to women. Punishments for misbehaving children and adult "law-breakers" were brutal by today's standards. More generally, the universe was seen as a small place with the earth at its center.

A series of spheres were thought to exist above the earth through which the sun, moon and observable planets traveled. Beyond these were the fixed stars and beyond them was God's angelic realm. Hades (or sheol) came to be seen as a fiery hell "below" the earth. The surface of the earth was thought to be a "battlefield" on which angels (from on high) and devils from below fought for human souls.

Most peoples' understanding of their Jewish, Christian or Islamic beliefs recognize that standards of human conduct also change with time. They interpret their faith in a way that's compatible with scientific knowledge and procedures. A small percentage in all faiths do not. They give literal meanings to words, phrases and stories of a (probably ancient) holy book.

In this series of lessons we have presented an academic understanding of a historical artifact, the Hebrew Bible. We have summarized the processes through which biblical historians and archaeologists think that it came to exist in its present form. These lessons say nothing whatsoever about the possible divine inspiration of the Old Testament or any holy book. This is a topic that must be explored with the family or religious leaders in which a person has confidence. All understandings must include human minds and human brains, and these lessons describe how most biblical scholars think they operated in their historical context.

Appendix: Bible Books

Today biblical scholars study Hebrew Bible books within the context of the literatures produced by other Middle Eastern peoples during the same time periods. Bible stories and values are seen as variations on themes that also are found in surrounding cultures. (For example, the one known Moabite literary passage reads as if it is from the Bible.) This type of understanding contrasts with traditional ways of studying the Old Testament as an isolated work. Until about 1800, the Bible was seen as having ideas that were unique to the Jews and their ancestors. (Carroll and Pricket, p. 322)

Book	**When Composed**	**Material Type/Historical Setting**
Genesis	Oral tradition written in recognizable form after 600 BCE. Last major editing, 400s BCE	Presented as history from creation through Abraham. A Traditional Date (TD) for Abraham is 1800 BCE.
Exodus	Same as above	Presented as history relating to Moses in Egypt and into desert wilderness
Leviticus	400s BCE	Priestly rules during Persian era written as commandments that Yahweh was giving to Moses.
Numbers	Oral traditions put in writing, 400s BCE	Presented as history of Israelites during their desert wanderings (TD 1100s).
Deuteronomy	Oral traditions put in writing. Last major editing during 400s BCE	A review of the above books with an addition on Moses receiving more laws, cursing evil and delivering his last speech to the Israelites.
Joshua	Same as above	Presented as history of Hebrews' entry into Canaan (TD 1100s-1000s BCE).
Judges	Same as above	Presented as history of Israelites in Canaan (TD about 1000 BCE).
Ruth	Oral tradition written between 700-300 BCE	A short story that takes place "when the Judges Ruled" (TD 1000 BCE).
Samuel (1 & 2)	Oral tradition written after 700 BCE. Last major editing during the Persian Era	Presented as history of last Judges and Kings Saul and David (TD 900s BCE).
Kings (1 & 2)	Same as above	Presented as history of Solomon and the Divided Kingdoms to Babylonian Captivity (TD 900 to 500s BCE).

Book	**When Composed**	**Material Type/Historical Setting**
Chronicles (1 & 2)	About 300 BCE during the Greek Period	Reviews Hebrew genealogical and historical claims from Adam to the beginning of the Persian Period
Ezra	About 300 BCE	Presented as the history of Jews during Persian rule. Taken from old sources. The same author as Chronicles.
Nehemiah	Same as above	Continues the story of Jews under the Persians. Same author as Ezra and Chronicles.[1]
Tobit, or Tobius (Roman Catholic & Greek Bibles)	About 200 BCE	A story that is set in Assyria in the 700s BCE.
Judith (Roman Catholic and Greek Bibles)	100s BCE	A romantic story with a setting that jumbles history from the 700s to the 500s BCE.
Esther (slight differences in Hebrew, Catholic & non-Catholic Bibles)	100s BCE	A historical romance with a setting in Persia in the 400s BCE.
Job	Ancient story written in Persian or Greek eras	Oral folktale having no specific historical setting.
Psalms	Compiled during Persian Period (after 538 BCE). Very old items, perhaps from David's time	Hymns of praise, woes and requests. There is an additional psalm (151) in the Greek Bible.
Proverbs	Same	Moral teaching probably designed for young Jewish men.
Ecclesiastes	300s BCE (Greek Era)	A pessimistic life view that seems at odds with other Bible books.
Song of Solomon	Ancient poetry from Persian or Greek times	Erotic love poetry that may have been part of early fertility festivals.
Wisdom (Roman Catholic and Greek Bibles only)	About 100 BCE	Author (speaking as several different people including Solomon) urges a love of righteousness and wisdom.

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[1] Originally, the books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah formed a single work that traced the historical traditions of the Israelite/Jewish people from Adam to Alexander the Great's conquest.

Book	**When Composed**	**Material Type/Historical Setting**
Ecclesiasticus, or Sirach (Catholic & Greek Bibles only)	190s to 170s BCE	A mixture of proverbs and praise to wisdom, God, founders and prophets.
Isaiah	Mixture of materials from many ages. Its present form dates from about 200 BCE or later.	Condemnations of religious and social abuses and presents the view that Yahweh controls all and he will send a messiah to create a perfect world.
Jeremiah	Mixture of materials from 600s BCE on. No final form achieved.[2]	Jeremiah lived during Josiah's time, but this book was edited and added to for centuries thereafter.
Lamentations	500s BCE	Poems of mourning because the Babylonians have destroyed the Jerusalem temple.
Baruch (Roman Catholic & Greek Orthodox Bibles Only)	Compiled about 100 BCE from various old sources	Composed as if written for exiles in Babylon during the 500s BCE. They are told to avoid idols and are promised that their captivity will end if if they repent their sins.
Ezekiel	500s BCE	Life as a captive priest in Babylonia and after returning to Jerusalem--mixed with visions of a messiah.
Daniel	200s BCE	Written as if a person living during the Babylonian era was predicting what would come in following centuries.
Hosea	700s BCE with later . additions	Condemns great wealth in northern state of Israel (destroyed in 712 BCE) God/human relations are compared to a marriage where the wife (humans) is unfaithful to the husband (God).
Joel	About 500 BCE (early Persian period)	Early example of apocalyptic (end of world) literature--plagues followed by judgment and then a new Judah.
Amos	700s BCE with large-scale later editing	Monotheistic view. Condemns worldliness and implies a judgment day and salvation for the chosen.

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[2] The Septuagint version is longer than the Hebrew version, and the material is arranged differently. A couple of other books (such as Esther) also are somewhat different in their Jewish and Christian versions.

Book	When Composed	Material Type/Historical Setting
Obadiah	Sometime after 500 BCE	The neighboring kingdom of Edom is condemned and a coming "day of the Lord" predicted when enemies will be destroyed.
Jonah	After 500 BCE	A parable that is written as if it is a history of happenings in Assyria in the 700s BCE
Micah	700s BCE with large-scale editing after 500 BCE	Worldliness in both Israel and Judah is condemned and destruction of both is "predicted." A new age of universal peace is foreseen.
Nahum	600s BCE with heavy editing after 500 BCE	An angry Yahweh (pictured as universal and all-powerful) will destroy Assyria and all other wicked nations.
Habakkuk	early 500s BCE with additions at a later date	Evil (which is condemned) can exist for awhile, but righteousness will prevail.
Zephaniah	late 600s BCE (Josiah's time) with later additions	A Yahweh-only text. Worship of other gods is condemned. A judgment day is predicted, and Yahweh believers will be saved.
Haggai	Shortly before 500 BCE	An historical account of rebuilding the Jerusalem temple and establishing rules of worship in it.
Zechariah	Shortly before 500 BCE with major later additions	On rebuilding the temple with visions of a coming messiah and new earth.
Malachi	About 450 BCE	Jews will be rewarded or punished on judgment day. Yahweh is said to hate neighboring Edomites. Marriage with foreigners is condemned.
Maccabees (1 & 2) (Roman Catholic and Greek Bibles only)	Middle 200s BCE	Two descriptions of the war with the Seleucid Greeks. The first is a view of Jewish revolutionaries. The second is in the context of Jewish history.

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Introduction

Religious Belief and Scientifically-Oriented Scholarship. This unit is based on historic and scientific scholarship. It focuses on how these authorities believe that the Bible--as a human artifact--developed into the forms that exist today. To avoid a "sectarian point of view" as described in *The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*, we focus on the factual data generated by academic research.

For example, experts say that much of the Old Testament came out of oral tradition, so we describe the nature of oral tradition. We quote from Jan Vansina's *Oral Tradition as History*. This academic perspective is standard, and can be verified by checking many other sources. For further reference we suggest "The Mystique of Oral Tradition" which is Chapter Three in *The Birth of Christianity* by John Dominic Crossan. (1999. HarperSanFrancisco, pp. 49-68). In this source Crossan provides a summary similar to our own as well as listing numerous additional sources.

Leaders in a public school may decide that they do not want this kind of presentation made because of community religious sensitivities. If so, it is hard to understand how the Bible constitutionally can be used as text material in the district. No public school can present the Hebrew Bible as the "word of God." To have students read the Old Testament as an example of what Jews or Christians believe is problematic. If done without teacher commentary, students likely will assume that believers interpret the Bible in a literal manner, and many do not. If generalized religious views are presented to students--such as being "fundamentalist" and "liberal," Jewish or Christian--a non-religious scholarly presentation seems mandatory also. Public schools traditionally have been expected to provide secular interpretations of whatever materials are used in class.

A word on the history texts produced by major publishers: Almost without exception these books jumble religious belief with academic history, especially when describing the origins of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A chief motivation for developing this unit has been to compensate for these deficiencies.

Teaching and Religious Bias. Teachers, like others, have religious and/or secular values. How can one keep strongly held beliefs from resulting in biased teaching? What does one tell students about personal religious beliefs when teaching about the Old Testament?

In a public school a teacher must try to be as objective as possible. To keep biases in check, he or she can imagine that a highly educated, diverse committee of scholars is monitoring the lessons. The imaginary committee includes religious people of various faiths and non-religious scholars as well. If such a group were actually in the classroom, the instructor would take special care to see that presentations and activities would be as non-biased as possible.

Openness and honesty are important. For instance, an instructor might say:

> I'm a Christian, but these beliefs are not relevant to what we are studying. In this unit we are looking at the Bible as an historical artifact--as a thing we can hold in our hands. We are examining what historians and archaeologists have learned about the earthly process through which it came into existence. As we study this artifact, I'll try to set my personal beliefs to one side. This is what scholars do when they think scientifically. To the degree possible, they separate their personal biases from the subject matter they are studying.
>
> We are examining the Old Testament much as an historian might study a document from President Lincoln's administration. The historian's opinion or belief as to whether Lincoln was a great President is not relevant to his study of the circumstances in which a particular document came into being.
>
> Or, think of an archaeologist who is excavating the remains of an ancient village where, apparently, people had been brutally slaughtered and the village burned. To the degree that she is thinking scientifically, her personal views about human warfare will not affect her study of when and how the village was destroyed.
>
> In this series of lessons we're studying what archaeologists and historians know about the origins of the Bible. I'll do my best to present to you what these scholars have found. You do your best to understand.

When a teacher begins any series of lessons that touch upon the Bible, she or he likely will be asked, "What is your religion?" That could be a relevant question. Students have a right to know an instructor's biases. They are attempting to do some source analysis for which they should be praised--assuming a critical thinking perspective is being used.

In religious schools, teachers likely are expected to propagate the belief system of the church or other religious organization that is supporting the school. If this is the only goal of instruction, the *History of the Hebrew Bible* may be of little interest. However, many religious school leaders also commonly want their students to be acquainted with academic viewpoints that are different from those of the sponsoring religious group. They agree with Karl Fezer who says this:

> Perhaps the most important principle is to test our ideas and our intentions by exposing them to the judgment of others....Those who have a worldview significantly different from our own are especially likely to be helpful....We may reject much of what they say, but they are more likely to provide us with nuggets of insight than persons who largely share our own views. (*Scholarly World, Private Worlds: Thinking Critically About Science, Religion, and Your Private Beliefs.* 2001. Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, p. 244)

Parents and Local Religious Leaders. Close contacts with parents and local community leaders should be a priority. We suggest contacting parents at the beginning of a course before any difficulties might arise. Invite them to visit the class in ways consistent with school policies. Provide them with booklets such as *The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide.* Use it to show them that lessons about the Bible must be presented in an "objective, academic manner;" that in public schools students cannot be "taught from a particular sectarian point of view."

If questions arise, show respect. Use conflict resolution techniques. For instance, try to state the parent's position better than he or she does, and then ask: "Is this your point of view?" If the parent is dissatisfied, ask for a further explanation and try again.

In history classes work with members of the local clergy who are academically trained in Biblical history. They likely know aspects of Bible history as well or better than school instructors. For example, a Lutheran minister may be able to describe Martin Luther's Old Testament translation in a way that goes far beyond what is in the text lesson.

Some leaders very concerned with maintaining constitutional separation between church and state have stated that it is inappropriate for clergy to speak in public school classrooms. (For example, see "Stealth Evangelism" by Rob Boston in the Oct., 1994, issue of *Church & State*, pages 4-8.) We think that is an overgeneralized position and that under certain circumstances a talk can be academically useful. As when driving a car or engaging in any activity that involves an element of uncertainty, we believe that one should exercise caution, clearly define objectives, secure necessary school approval and then go ahead.

Personal Student Beliefs. If in accord with school policy, an instructor may also decide to give students an opportunity to describe how their personal beliefs relate to the history of the Hebrew Bible. In a public school a student should identify whether he or she is presenting a religious group's views--as a speaker would--and clearly indicate that the presentation is a statement of personal belief. Further, a student making this kind of a presentation should avoid common fallacies--as during other class projects. As summarized in *Thinking Logically: A Study of Common Fallacies* (1990. Phoenix, AZ: GSP, Inc.) these common thinking errors include:

1. **Wise Men Fallacy**. Thinking that something is true just because it is stated by a person who seems to be an "authority." An extreme of this fallacy is thinking that one skill or talent makes a person an expert on almost all matters.
2. **Overgeneralization**. Thinking that one or a few isolated bits of evidence justify a broad, sweeping conclusion, or that abstract concepts actually exist.
3. **False Cause and Effect**. Thinking that a complicated situation has only one or a few causes when there may be many, or thinking that one thing caused another just because it happened before the other.

4. **Crowd Appeal**. Thinking that the truth about something--the facts--can be determined by the number of people who believe it.
5. **Self-evident Truth**. Thinking that personal ideas are common knowledge and no evidence is required, or falsely trying to establish "proof" by using a word in an odd or unusual way.
6. **Thin-entering Wedge**. Believing that one small happening will start a trend that cannot be stopped and/or thinking that once trend has developed it will continue unchanged into the distant future.
7. **Getting Personal**. Confusing the merits of products, ideas, laws and so forth with the reputations of the people who made or proposed them.
8. **You're Another**. Accusing the accuser when faced with a problem, or claiming to answer a question by asking a question.
9. **Guilt by Association**. Thinking that a person who has some traits in common with another person or group must be similar in many additional ways.
10. **Either/or Thinking**. Assuming that there are only two exclusive or vastly different explanations or solutions to a problem. Failing to be aware of moderate, in-between positions.
11. **False Analogy**. Thinking that proof is found through comparison, using incomplete comparison or those that confuse an issue.
12. **Arguing in Circles**. Thinking that proof is established through repetition of the same idea. Using words to define themselves--or those that lack clear meaning.
13. **Misleading Facts and Figures**. Using half-truths, percentages of unknown, or distorted averages or charts. Thinking that big numbers necessarily are significant, or confusing precision and accuracy and relevance.

Dealing with Miraculous Happenings and Abhorrent Practices. The Hebrew Bible describes numerous miraculous happenings as well as practices that are abhorrent by modern standards. What should instructors do?

For centuries Jewish and Christian scholars have thought deeply about the miracle-descriptions that are found in the Old Testament, and no agreement exists. Now, as in the past, the range of interpretations is wide--from literal acceptance to allegorical interpretations compatible with modern science.

The National Bible Association and the First Amendment Center state quite clearly that "Supernatural occurrences and divine action described in the Bible may not be taught as historical fact in a public school." *The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*. Students need to contact their religious leaders for explanations for their group's understanding of Bible miracles. The lessons in this unit provide a scholarly understanding of how the Hebrew Bible--with all of its miracle stories--came into existence. It does not attempt any interpretation of the miracle stories themselves.

Dealing with the abhorrent practices found in the Bible also requires forethought.

A first step is to acknowledge that such passages exist. Repeatedly Yahweh is pictured as causing, commanding or approving human acts that today are seen as immoral and often illegal. These include sanctioning slavery as well as requiring the death penalty (often by stoning) for a long list of acts--some no longer thought to be wrong by most Americans. In addition, women often are pictured in a subservient way, and sometimes as being almost subhuman. A teacher can lose credibility if the existence of these passages is denied, covered up or not known.

As with the miracle stories, students can be referred to their religious leaders for help in understanding these biblical passages in a way that is compatible with the family belief system. A teacher also can talk about the changing nature of human morality and how interpretations of holy book passages change with time.

Given the current world situation as it relates to Islam, students also need to know that the Koran is patterned after the Old Testament in significant ways (as explained in Chapter 12). They should be aware that the same general kind of "war-god" commands used by Islamic terrorists to "justify" their actions also are found in the Bible. Most Jews and Christians have found ways to work around these ancient, culturally limited views. Most Muslims living in the United States and many living elsewhere also have found ways of dealing with the "war-god" commands of Allah--the same God that is worshiped by Jews and Christians. However, any group can become dangerous if leaders start believing that their "god-commanded" or otherwise "glorious" goals justify violent aggression.

Thoughts on Methods of Instruction

Pictures and Preparation. The *History of the Hebrew Bible* has no illustrations for rather obvious reasons relating to the economics of publication. Anyway, we believe that students can and should provide their own graphics. Students must be more than classroom voyeurs, and having them be responsible for some lesson illustrations is a task many enjoy, and it can be beneficial to the class as a whole.

Many students--including those who struggle with reading and writing--have artistic abilities that they can use to demonstrate their thinking about the class lesson. These illustrations can become part of their preparation grade, and the best ones can be saved and used in future classes. Like most of us, young people want their lives to have meaning, and producing illustrations is a clear and simple way of demonstrating that their work will be a positive influence on class members who come after them. Those with computer skills can secure relevant illustrations by using this technology. However, graphics should relate to what biblical historians and archaeologists have found out about the origins of the Hebrew Bible, not what one might find on the walls in a classroom associated with a synagogue, church or mosque.

Television-focused students can find programs that deal with the Bible from actual historical and archaeological perspectives. A relevant segment of a such a program can be taped and turned into a class project. After explaining how the program relates to the unit, the class can view a section of it. This methodology also helps an instructor stay abreast of current offerings on the dozens of television channels available in many parts of the United States. Such taping and classroom use is legal under the Fair Use provisions of the Copyright Act.[1]

Those who find the material hard to understand can take detailed notes, write out questions on concepts they don't understand, or make lists of words or sentences they find confusing. They can also work with class mentors. Talented students who are not interested in art work or mentoring--and for whom drill on simple assignments may be unnecessary--can conduct research that goes far beyond the text. They can use the footnotes or bibliography as a starting point. They can find additional academic sources on a particular lesson or check out an authority's background to determine his or her relevant academic qualifications. In short, students can be involved in a variety of class activities regardless of personal talents, or so we believe.

Repetition, Memorization and Drill. Learning involves repetition. Teachers--other than those in advanced classes, perhaps--need to go over basic points more than once, and good teachers will find drill methods that maintain student interest. They may approach a central concept from multiple perspectives, using a variety of interesting examples. Class discussions can provide socratic-like interaction or take many other profitable forms. An effective teacher will check students' preparation.

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[1] Programs sponsored by particular religious groups--or those based upon pseudo-history--are unlikely to contribute to students' academic understanding of the origins of the Hebrew Bible, which is the object of the unit.

Once taught, an idea must be used if it is to remain in students' minds. The "use it or lose it" idea applies to mental activity just as it does to physical skills. By design, there is some repetition in the *History of the Hebrew Bible*. As students progress through the series of lessons, they can be encouraged to refer back to previous ones. A teacher also should compare and contrast what students learn in this unit with what they have studied in previous units. They can be asked how the material compares to what they have learned in other classes as well as from other adults.

Essentially the same maps are used repeatedly throughout the unit. Also, basic maps without labels are included in this manual that can be photocopied for student use. It is our hope that students will complete the unit with a firm mental image of a map of the Middle East as it relates to the development of the Hebrew Bible.

We recommend that timeline activities accompany most lessons. In addition to acquiring a mental map of the area, students progressively should secure an understanding of the sequence of events that has resulted in our modern Bibles. Acquiring an ability to picture events happening in chronological order is difficult, and constructing timelines is one way to develop a historical way of thinking. As an aid to timeline construction, we've organized the lessons in a chronological manner using century divisions for the most part. Round numbers are not magical, and we object to texts that present a time period as an "Age of" some particular trait. Nonetheless, the *History of the Hebrew Bible* is a series of lessons for young adults whose historical understanding likely is minimal. One must begin from where students are.

Lectures are useful. The human voice carries multiple levels of meaning that the printed word misses. As in all classroom activities, the attention span of students should be considered. In most high school classes a lecture probably should be restricted to about 20 minutes. Some lecture possibilities are found on pages 11-20.

As they make graphics, use maps, construct timelines and take notes on reading assignments and lectures, students need to be memorizing key concepts and events. Effective memorization is of central importance in learning, and teaching students the techniques for effective memorization should be a priority--if they lack these skills.

Memorization and *drill* are words that have extremely negative connotations for many teachers. Often they are accompanied by adjectives such as *mindless* or the word, *rote* used in a pejorative manner. Reasons why teachers moved away from these activities are relatively easy to understand. They frequently were overused with no clear objectives in mind. Students didn't know what the drills were to accomplish. Afterwards, the facts and concepts were not used and soon forgotten.

But instead of making the memorization more relevant, educators tended to start believing that directed instruction was obsolete. At the extreme, pupil-selected materials were studied almost exclusively through "active involvement." A message that students tended to receive, however, was that they didn't have to prepare their lessons, do homework, or review. Adolescents sometimes even thought that they lacked this almost-universal human skill.

If given an opportunity and incentive, many students can memorize quickly and well. In a positive environment, these pupils commonly are eager to display their talents, especially if they are a "ticket" to individualized learning of some sort (while other students complete their memorizing tasks). Well-designed drills based upon mastery learning even provide an opportunity for cooperative learning. Skilled students can help others, and many enjoy doing so. Academically challenged students often find that they too can memorize, a skill that is widely useful. In addition, a judicious amount of required memorization--that is used and combined with other activities--helps create a work atmosphere. It unites students in common tasks. Here are some memorizing ideas that some students have found helpful:

1. **Memorize when rested and alert.** Late night memorization often doesn't work.
2. **Memorize only a few items at one time and take frequent breaks.** Work on other activities between memorizing sessions. Review memorized items before trying to learn more.
3. **Reward oneself**, perhaps listening a favorite musical group after a memorizing session, eating a bite of a favorite food, or "sipping a coke."
4. **Write out ideas** in various ways with only occasional glances at the text. Make an outline or compose a poem or song. (Rhymed material often is easily remembered.) Make flash cards for personal use and to help classmates.
5. **Be active, physically engaged.** It may sound silly, but some students are helped by doing such things as talking into a tape recorder, "acting like a teacher,"--or even tracing words in the air with a finger. Or, make a scrapbook, word puzzle, computerized drill, poster or other project. Use whatever works!
6. **Tutor a classmate, or teach a lesson to a family member, or find another socially constructive way to use what one wants to learn.** Instructing others is a good way to learn oneself.
7. **Review frequently.** Put material to be memorized where it can be seen and where you will be reminded of it. Tape it to a bedroom mirror, a kitchen refrigerator or elsewhere in clear view. Keep flash cards handy and refer to them instead of wasting time waiting for someone to arrive or some event to begin. Play a review cassette recording when driving.
8. **Use associations.** Turn memorization into enjoyable activities. Make funny words out of first letters. Use acronyms. Link an idea to a color, a person or an object. Visualize ideas. Group things as you would the multiple digits of a phone number.
9. **Take pride in memory accomplishments.** Use memorized information in class discussions and conversations when appropriate. Think of how people use new words that they want to remember.
10. **Don't give up** if success is not immediate. Consider your ability to memorize song lyrics. Get help from a fellow student. See a teacher.

Evaluating Student Work. Evaluating procedures depend upon school and departmental policies as well as an instructor's talents and time. We recommend multiple means for this kind of unit. We found a 1/3 rule to be helpful. In this system, a third of a student's grade is based upon outside-of-class preparation including individual projects. One-third is based upon in-class work and socially responsible participation--including mentoring. The final third is based upon a concluding test. In a non-tracked class, a system similar to this requires talented students to "work hard for their 'A,'" and it gives struggling students a chance to earn a respectable grade through diligent effort. Further, it tends to unite a classroom of students with diverse abilities--as opposed to consistently pitting them against one another.

Writing represents a student's reasoned thought, we recommend using a concluding essay test. Further, we suggest that a system be devised that allows students some input on the questions that will be included on the test. We do not think that the chapter quizzes that are included should be used for final testing purposes. If they are, students need an opportunity to write out their line of reasoning for items on which they had "wrong" answers. And, they should receive appropriate credit for showing a reasoned knowledge of the matter.

Conclusion. Most students will accept the hard work of formal instruction if they see that it leads to goals that make sense, if psychological awards are provided, if drill work is one activity among many, and if memorized data is used. Instructors should use discussions, dialogues, student reports, cooperative learning, individualized study and student initiated projects. However, traditional kinds of instruction should not be dismissed because they were overused in the past or employed in illogical ways.

A coaching analogy is relevant. As in music, sports and other skill areas, history teachers should be empathetic and treat students as individuals. They should build upon student strengths, use student insights and help young people work around their weaknesses. We also are convinced that teachers--like coaches--should be respected authority figures.

As a rule, athletic coaches do not let adolescent players democratically determine game plans. They do not eliminate drills or say that memorizing particular play patterns is obsolete. They do not tell team members to just "express themselves" in a game. The remainder of this manual consists of lecture/discussion materials followed by those things that may be useful for classroom drill and review.

Lecture/Discussion Materials

(Some of this material may be useful in particular classes)

Understanding An Origin of Supernatural Stories

Mircea Eliade provides an example from the past century that illustrates how supernatural stories can arise. The selection comes from *Cosmos and History*, published by Harper & Brothers in 1954, pages 44-46. (*Cosmos and History* is Willard Trask's English translation of *Le Mythe di l'e'ternel retour* (Paris, Librairie Gallimard, 1949).

> ...the recollection of a historical event or a real personage survives in popular memory for two or three centuries at the utmost. This is because popular memory finds difficulty in retaining individual events and real figures. The structures by means of which it functions are different: categories instead of events, [stereotypes, not real people].
>
> ……
>
> Sometimes. . . an investigator chances to come upon the actual transformation of an event into myth. Just before the last war, the Romanian folklorist, Constantin Brailoiu had occasion to record an admirable ballad in a village in Maramures. Its subject was a tragedy of love: the young suitor had been bewitched by a mountain fairy, and a few days before he was to be married, the fairy, driven by jealousy, had flung him from a cliff. . . .In the course of recording the variants that he was able to collect, the folklorist tried to learn the period when the tragedy had occurred; he was told that it was a very old story, which had happened "long ago." Pursuing his inquiries, however, he learned that the event had taken place not quite forty years earlier. He finally even discovered that the heroine was still alive. He went to see her and heard the story from her own lips. It was a quite commonplace tragedy: one evening her lover had slipped and fallen over a cliff; he had not died instantly; his cries had been heard by mountaineers; he had been carried to the village where he had died soon after. At the funeral, his fiance, with the other women in the village, had repeated the customary ritual lamentations, without the slightest allusion to the mountain fairy.
>
> Thus, despite the presence of the principal witness, a few years had sufficed to strip the event of all historical authenticity, to transform it into a legendary tale. . . . When the folklorist drew the villagers' attention to the authentic version, they replied that the old woman had forgotten; that her great grief had almost destroyed her mind.

Questions/Discussion

What relevance, if any, does this account have in regard to a study of the Hebrew Bible?

Are you aware of any somewhat similar events in your community--and the fanciful stories that grew up afterwards? Have there been times when--in your judgment--an ordinary happening has been seen by others as having supernatural meaning?

The Religion of Zoroaster

Zoroaster is the Greek name for Zarathushtra, who probably was an independent-thinking Aryan priest living in Iran during the 600s BCE. Zoroastrianism became a Persian state religion, and its influence expanded with Persian power beginning in the 500s BCE. This influence extended to the Jews and then to Christianity and Islam. This summary is from *Freethought Across the Centuries* by Gerald A. Larue,1996. Amherst NY: Humanist Press, pp. 75-76. A more detailed account by Mary Boyce is in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, pages 1168-1174.

> Zoroastrian religion...postulated the idea of a single god of goodness and truth. According to Zoroaster, Ahura Mazda was the all-knowing creator and sustainer of the world of good. From this god emerged all the good and positive factors of the universe including light and wisdom and truth. Then, how could one account for evil? The answer introduced the concept of cosmic dualism. Evil came from the "Hostile Spirit," Angra Mainyu (also called Ahriman), the epitome of evil who was the opposing spirit and the symbol of darkness and the lie. These two counterforces became personified and their attributes became personalities or opposing angelic and demonic identities who were part of heavenly versus satanic hierarchies. Surrounding Ahura Mazda were Good Thought, Correct Action, Wisdom, Piety, Salvation and Immortality. Ahriman's forces included Evil Thought or Deceit, Pride, Disease, Irreverence and Desecration....
>
> Each individual was free to choose which side he or she would support. Every act, every thought testified either to allegiance to Ahura Mazda or to Ahriman. Zoroastrian myth called humans to a life of rigid discipline in support of the good, the truth and the proper, despite the ever present pressure from the cohorts of Ahriman that tempted them to betray the commitment
>
> What was the reward for good behavior? What advantage was there if one followed the way of Ahura Mazda but suffered nothing but misfortune? The answer lay in the future and in the afterlife. Within the cosmic bipolarity, Zoroaster envisioned history moving toward an ultimate goal. As time moved through its various periods--from the age of gold, to the age of silver, then to bronze and iron--it approached closer and closer to end time. Ultimately there would be a final conflict in which the powers of good and truth and light would overcome the forces of evil, the lie and darkness. Then (according to later Zoroastrian mythology) in the [end times], a savior would come to renew all existence, produce a new cosmos, resurrect the dead and unite body and soul.
>
> Meanwhile, at death, each human soul approached a bridge called *Civat* or "The Bridge of the Separator" over which the righteous could pass to paradise. The wicked, the foolish followers of the lie, would be turned back for punishment. They would go to the house of the lie, the place of evil thought, to dwell throughout the ages in darkness, misery. Finally, at the end of time, following the final conflict all would be resurrected, judged and tested by passing through a flood of molten metal. For the followers of Ahura Mazda the passages would be as going through a warm bath. They would then enter the realm of of the righteous, the house of song , the dwelling place of good thought where they would behold the divine throne of Ahura Mazda. As for the wicked, they would be utterly destroyed (although some texts suggest that, after terrible suffering that would purge them of evil, they too would be admitted to paradise.)

Questions/Discussion When and how did these ideas became known to the Jews? How did these ideas affect their own religious thinking?

Religious Change: Judaism & the Babylonian Captivity

All living religions slowly change as human life changes. During times of extreme crisis, religions can change fast and in dramatic ways. The Babylonian Captivity period was one such time in the history of Judaism. From *Why Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile* by John S. Spong (1998. San Francisco: HarperCollins), pp. 24-28.

> When the army of the Babylonians appeared on the Jewish horizon in those early years of the sixth century [500s] B.C.E., the city of Jerusalem had not been conquered...for over four hundred years. Standing within its protective walls was the sacred Temple of Yahweh...the earthly dwelling place of their God. [They thought their centuries of freedom] were neither accidental nor the result of its natural defenses alone. This city, they believed, was protected by nothing less than the holy God.

Now, however, King Jehoiachin--seeing the strength of the Babylonian army--negotiated a settlement. The city was saved, but most of the freedoms of Judah's people were lost. And, in 588 BCE., Jews rebelled against the Babylonians, but they lost. Babylonian soldiers poured into Jerusalem killing all Jewish resisters. The city itself was burned.

> Everything these people valued...was gone. Their nation was no more. Jerusalem, God's special city, was a pile of stones. The Temple, God's earthly dwelling place, was laid waste. The priesthood, their sacred customs,...the social fabric that gave order to life--all were lost.

Nonetheless, from this destruction a more universal view of God developed. Yahweh no longer was thought to be bound to a particular building, city, or geographic region. God could dwell in the hearts and minds of the people wherever they were. This idea evolved into Western monotheism that became the basis of later Judaism and for Christianity and Islam as well.

Questions/Discussion

1. What modern historical situations--if any--do you see as somewhat similar to the situation that the people of Judah faced in the 500s BCE?
2. Do any large numbers of Jews, Christians and/or Muslims--followers of the major Abrahamic world religions today--feel that their beliefs are being threatened? If so, what is seen as a threat?
3. What can religious people do to effectively deal with (what they see as) "threats" to their faith? What kinds of actions most likely will be successful in the long run? What kinds are likely to be self-defeating?
4. How difficult is it for a people to change a basic understanding of their religion--as the Jews did after 600 BCE? What basic beliefs--if any--is it necessary for people to change today?

Ancient and Modern World Views

From Why *Christianity Must Change or Die: A Bishop Speaks to Believers in Exile* by John S. Spong (1998, San Francisco: HarperCollins), pp. 29-39. The Hebrew Bible came into existence and was closed when people had a very different understanding of the universe that they do now.

> [In the West] according to the ancient work of a Greek astronomer named Hipparchus, the universe was assumed to consist of three tiers. ...it was common wisdom that the earth was flat and was located directly beneath the sky. Beyond that sky was the realm in which the all-seeing holy God was believed to live. Thus human life was thought to bask in the ready and constant attention of this personal deity. Hell was the third tier of this universe and was assumed to be located beneath the earth. In this cozy three-tiered world everything that was not understood or that seemed either irrational or inconvenient was assumed to be [caused by] this heavenly God's specific divine intervention. Concepts like miracle and magic abounded. When bad things occurred in people's lives, they were interpreted to be divine punishment, the just deserving for errant human behavior.

The heavens, earth-surface and underworld were thought to be interconnected. Angels from on high and devils from below were thought to met on the earthly plain where they interacted with humans. And, at times people were thought capable of descending into hell or visiting heaven for a period of time.

Modern world-views are vastly different due to the work of many scientists over the centuries. These include Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1573), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), and Isaac Newton (1643-1727). It was further changed by Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Albert Einstein (1879-1955) and numerous other scientists.

As human understanding of the universe changes, religions also evolve. No major religious leader today says that the earth is flat or claims that stars are holes in the sky through which the light of heaven shines. Few still proclaim that there is an eternal hell under the earth's crust. Through multiple experiments scientists are fairly confident that they know the general characteristics of the interior of the earth as well as the make up of stars and the galaxies of which they are a part.

Thinking in terms of centuries, the faith systems that survive are those who have leaders capable of reinterpreting doctrines so that they continue to inspire followers in light of humans' increasing scientific understanding of the earth and the universe of which it is a part.

Questions/Discussion: How does your world-view now compare with that of your early childhood? What recent scientific advances have modified your perceptions? Do you think that these changes will continue? As an example, consider current genetic research. How is it now changing our understanding of human life?

Comparing Western (Abrahamic) Religions with South Asian Religions (Hinduism and Buddhism)

Modern world religions have had two principle centers of origin. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all began in the Middle East--the areas just east of the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. These religions share many basic concepts about the nature of the eternal moral order since they have common roots. Together they are called the major Western Religions. Hinduism and Buddhism began in South Asia, and they are referred to as Eastern Religions. South Asia includes the modern nations of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

Eastern Religions. In the East, Hinduism began developing when holy men--whose names are not recorded--evolved pantheistic views of god. Pantheism means that the world and all parts of the universe are elements of the divine. All is god, or "The One." If all is part of The One, there can be no ungodly actions as these are understood by followers of Western faiths. Instead of seeing actions as good (godly) or evil (ungodly), holy men devised a system of appropriate actions for all forces and living creatures including humans. Appropriate actions for humans vary, traditional Hindus believe, according to age, sex, and caste. These Hindus may see Caste as a strict class system determined by birth. In addition, they may divide castes into thousands of sub-castes called varna which, they believe, should determine one's occupation and lifestyle. For them, appropriate behavior, or morality, is dictated by how closely one follows the age-old rules set for an age group, sex, caste and varna.

These beliefs are linked with the idea of reincarnation or the transmigration of souls. Hindu holy men believe that souls have existed since the beginning of time. Every living creature has a soul. As one particular body dies, the soul transfers to another body in a cycle of birth, growth, death and then rebirth. If a person acts in appropriate ways, at death the soul will be elevated into the body of a higher caste member. Eventually--probably after countless lifetimes--it will be purified and will merge with The One. This merging often is pictured as similar to a raindrop falling into the ocean. If a person does not act appropriately, the soul will be reborn into a lower caste member or into a lesser creature.

Buddhism began as a reform movement of Hinduism about 500 BCE. Early Buddhists were disturbed by ideas associated with caste and varna, the elaborate Hindu priestly ceremonies, and the idea that one's soul had to endure countless lifetimes. Instead, Buddhists came to believe that humans could break out of the cycle of rebirths during the present life by achieving enlightenment.

Enlightenment in a Buddhist sense means deliverance--cosmic understanding leading to mental peace--through personal activities. One achieves enlightenment by acquiring an understanding of the essential nature of the universe. Over the centuries hundreds of Buddhist sects have appeared, the founders of each having developed their own ideas on how enlightenment can best be achieved. The classic view is to understand that life is suffering and that suffering is caused by desire. To eliminate suffering, one must gain control of her or his desires and live in a modest, non-offensive way.

These Hindu and Buddhist ideas have been worked out in great detail over the centuries in many holy books. Hindu sacred literature includes the *Vedas*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* that may be similar to an encyclopedia in length. Buddhist holy literature includes many volumes called sutras.

Hindus and Buddhists place no special emphasis on dead bodies. The dead are burned soon after death. According to traditional belief, cremation helps release the soul. One does not see many cemeteries in Eastern Religion lands.

Western (Abrahamic) Religions. Yahweh (Jehovah) is one name that Jews and Christians use for their god; Muslims--the followers of Islam--refer to Allah. Yahweh, Jehovah, or Allah, is seen as the maker and overseer of the universe, but not one with it. This way of thinking creates a dualism. There is a universal creator and the resulting cosmos. Think of an artist along with the art object that is created.

Once this division, conceptual split or dualism is accepted, evil is explained as a kind of "infection by a foreign body." The world--in this mental image--is somewhat like a baby. It was created by its mother but now has a somewhat separate existence--and it has *gotten sick*.

How this "sickness" is explained depends on the Western faith variation one follows. Speaking broadly, Jewish people think in terms of the inevitable results of separation--what necessarily is lost when leaving the womb. Most Christians and Muslim believers assume that an anti-god, or devil, somehow mutated from God and is now an infecting agent.

The result is that, for the followers of Western religions, the earth is a battleground between forces of good and evil. To be moral, a person must side with the good. If successful, Christians and Muslims believe that their souls keep their individual essence at death and join God in heaven--which, most believe, is outside of the created universe. Evildoers are excluded. (Jewish people may or may not share this view. Some believe--along with non-religious people--that rewards and punishments are limited to this earth.)

In this system only human beings are believed to have souls. And, each person has a separate soul which is believed to have come into existence at conception or some time during pregnancy or at birth. Unlike followers of Eastern faiths, members of

Western faiths believe that each eternal soul has only one lifetime to side with God. Each life--and (in some religious variations) each fertilized egg--is assumed to have an eternal significance.

Western religious people may believe that there is one standard of conduct for everybody regardless of age, ethnic background, social class or other groupings, although actual practice may be quite different. For instance, Muslims officially believe that both men and women should dress modestly. But in some nations such as Afghanistan, the "modesty" required of women far exceeds that of men. Christians and Jews may also treat the genders differently in actual practice. As one example, positions of religious leadership may be reserved for men only.

When compared to Hindus and Buddhists, Western religions are based on small amounts of literature. The Torah (Christian *Pentateuch*) consists of the first five books of the Old Testament of the *Bible*, and is one central source of the Jewish faith. Christians consider the *New Testament* Gospels to be particularly significant because they contain historical references to the words of Jesus. Christians believe that Jesus is the savior sent by God (the central story of this Western faith). Muslims believe Allah's moral order is most completely revealed in the *Koran*. The *Koran*, Muslims believe, was dictated by an angel of Allah to the prophet, Muhammad (570-632 CE). The authors of the *Bible* and *Koran* are considered to be divinely inspired. Some believers see the holy books as word-for-word revelations. For other believers holy books embody *moral truth*. They are not designed to be a substitute for scholarly understanding of history or science.

Today, becoming an authority on a religious holy book may require years of education. These experts likely learn the original languages of the authors of the holy books. As described in this unit, the *written* word was basic to the development of the Jewish religion (600 BCE - 100 BCE), as well as to Christianity and Islam. Authorities study the cultural settings in which the books were written and the interpretations that previous scholars have made. They compare the holy book with the religious literatures found in other cultures, perhaps with an eye toward determining common origins. For example, the lessons describe some of the Persian Zoroastrian influences on the Hebrew Bible.

In neither the East nor the West are religious authorities united in their understanding of their written holy books, or scriptures. There are disputes about interpretations, translations as well as what should be considered "holy."

Members of Eastern faiths commonly believe that there are many paths to divinity while Western religions are much more exclusive. A member of one Western religion cannot be a member of another. For instance, a Christian can convert to Islam, but not be both at once. Eastern religions are less exclusive.

Even details of one's beliefs often are considered fundamentally important. As a result, religious wars have been common in the West even though the combatants may have the same general view of the same God. People--even those relying upon the same holy book--have battled one another. As in the past, religious wars today most often are fought in those parts of the world influenced by Western faiths.

To prevent religious leaders and followers from abusing others, concepts of religious freedom and separation of church and state have arisen in the West. In nations such as the United States, governmental agency people are prohibited from using their positions or the programs they administer to promote or favor religion in general or any one faith in particular.

End Notes. Most religious people remain loyal to their traditional faiths. They worship with their friends and relatives under the guidance of religious leaders who are representatives of large, long established organizations. These organizations--like other human institutions--develop ways to keep particular people from destroying what has been built up over the generations.

However, religious organizations are not divorced from the societies in which they exist. As human cultures evolve, religions change too, and new faiths develop. Some societies provide for these developments. The "separation of church and state" doctrines in the United States allow old religions to endure and change to remain relevant to people's lives--and new faiths evolve as well.

Questions/Discussion:

1. The generalizations made in this reading are extremely broad, and multiple exceptions exist within all of the world religions. Also, the focus is on traditional forms of these religions, and no faith system remains static. As a result, your understanding of your religion may differ considerably from the summary given here. What major differences are you aware of?

2. Today, people from diverse religious traditions come into contact, and attempts are made to reconcile religious systems. What attempts to blend Eastern and Western faiths are you aware of? What are the "Rules for Successful and Happy Marriages" when people from very different religious traditions marry and have children?

Note: The underlined terms and phrases relate to study guides that are available from The Teachers' Press upon request.

The Golden Rule

The English word *golden* has long been used to signify that which has high value or quality. However, it seems not to have been used to refer to human conduct until fairly recently. The capitalized phrase *Golden Rule* appears only within the last 120 years.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, Second Edition, 1989, Vol. 6, page 656), there is no record of *golden* being used to refer to desired ways of behaving until the late 1600s. Then, in 1674, Godfrey wrote that "Whilst forgetting that Golden Law, *do as you would be done by*, they make self the center of their actions." In 1741 Watts spoke of "that golden principle of morality which the blessed Lord has given us." The *Golden Rule* title first appears in a literary work in the 1880s according to the *Dictionary*.

It is found in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, a novel written by William Dean Howells. Howells was a leading American writer of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, one of his major works, continues to be published. The "Golden Rule" appears in the book only once, and it is used as a shaming devise. Rogers, a business associate, uses it in an attempt to persuade Silas Lapham to do what Rogers wants him to do. Rogers says:

> Well, then, I want you to give me this chance to get on my feet again. You've no right to deprive me of it; it's unchristian. In our dealings with each other we should be guided by the Golden Rule, as I was saying to Mrs. Lapham before you came in. I told her that if I knew myself, I should in your place consider the circumstances of a man in mine,... (From Harpers' Modern Classics, 1958. New York: Harper and Brothers, page 342.)

Although the *Golden Rule* title is of recent origin, the "treat others as you'd like to be treated" is an age-old idea. Almost all enduring ethical systems--secular and religious--contain variations. Examples from world religions and ethical systems follow. Please note, however, that these statements almost certainly did not mean to their authors what they seem to mean to us today. Belief that one has a moral responsibility for people anywhere on earth is a recent development. The idea of human equality--treating people in similar ways regardless of gender, religion, age, social status, nationality and ethnic background--was not a part of ancient ways of understanding. People's identifications and loyalties were much more narrowly drawn.

Examples from Enduring Religions and Ethical Systems

Confucianism: Tzu Kung asked: "Is there any one word that can serve as a principle for conduct of life?" Confucius said: "perhaps...'reciprocity': Do not do to others what you would not want others to do to you." *The Analects* in *Great Religions of the World*, (*National Geographic*, 1971, page 167).

Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to thee, would cause thee pain." *Mahabharata*, 5, 1517, *Readings From World Religions* compiled by Champion and Short, page 15. This is one of many similar verses from Hindu literature that are found in *Readings From World Religions*.

Buddhism: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself." *Udanavarga* 5, 18 as quoted from page 174 in *Readings From World Religions* compiled by Selwyn Gurney Champion and Dorothy Short (1951. Boston: The Beacon Press).

"'Practice the truth that thy brother is the same as thou,' said Buddha." (Ruth Cranston, *World Faith*, 1949. NY: Harper & Brothers, page 40.)

Jainism: "A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated." From *Sutrakritanga* as quoted from Champion and Short, page 151.

Zoroastrianism: "That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self" from *Dadistan-i dinik*. "Do not unto others all that which is not well for oneself" from *Shayat-na-shayast* . Both are as quoted in Champion and Short, page 87.

Judaism: "You shall not take revenge or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." *Leviticus*, Chapter 19, verse 18. From *The Torah* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962, page 217.)

Taoism: "Treat well those who are good, Also treat well those who are not good; thus is goodness attained. Be sincere to those who are sincere, Also be sincere to those who are insincere; thus is sincerity attained." Chapter 12 of the Ma-wang-tui manuscripts of the *Tao Te Ching* as translated by Victor H. Mair (1990. New York: Bantam Books, Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, page 17).

Christianity: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew, Chapter 7, verse 12 from the "New Testament" of the *Holy Bible; New Revised Standard Version* (1989. New York: Oxford University Press, page 7).

Sikhism: "Treat others as thou wouldst be treated thyself." *Angad M.* 2, 29 as quoted from Champion and Short, page 299.

Questions and Activities:

1. Which Golden Rule variations seem to relate to relations within one group? Who does Tzu Kung likely mean by "others"? What would "others" probably have meant to an early Hindu or Buddhist? Would women likely have been included in any these statements? Children?

2. Is the Golden Rule always a wise course of action? Do exceptions exist?

3. How does Amitai Etzioni use the term in *The New Golden Rule* (1996, New York: Basic Books, pages 12-13). What forms of the Golden Rule do members of your family use in their daily conversations?

4. If your faith isn't represented, contact one of your religious leaders and secure a similar statement within your belief system.

5. How does The Golden Rule relate to the theme of *The Rise of Silas Lapham*?

Quizzes, Timelines and Maps

Quizzes. A one-page quiz is provided for each of first 12 lessons. These may be helpful as:

1. Assignment worksheets.
2. Preparation checks. The quizzes are based upon the large-type text, not footnote information. (The footnotes contain important data, and we hope that instructors will use these footnotes in their oral presentations and classroom work. Students often overlook footnotes unless they're instructed that they are a part of their assignment.)
3. Review tools preceding the unit test. We suggest that student understanding be evaluated primarily on factors other than multiple choice tests. If these quizzes are used for evaluative purposes, we suggest that students be given an opportunity to explain "wrong" answers. Their alternative line of reasoning may be logical and consistent with the text material. (We recommend that students write out their line of reasoning. Writing is considered thought, quite different than verbal classroom arguments about specific test items. These may be emotion-laden, propagandistic attempts to secure a better grade.)
4. A basis for critical thinking activities. Could more than one answer be essentially correct? (See above.) Why might the designated answer be less than adequate? Students with wide-ranging knowledge may have logical ways of thinking based upon sound history that lead them to "wrong" answers. These students should be encouraged to think closely about the questions.
5. For emergency use by a substitute teacher. As an example, a substitute can have students develop a consensus answer for each question and note the pages in the text that support their choice.

Note: If students lack English language proficiency, multiple choice tests may be particularly hard to comprehend since a specialized use of the language is involved.

Timeline Study. The dates used in the chapters are listed in the order that they appear in that lesson. A simple timeline master with ten equal segments can be used to plot the essential developments in the Hebrew Bible on a lesson-by-lesson basis and as a review. If an inch segment equals 100 years, for example, major developments between 1000 BCE and the beginning of the common era can be plotted on one sheet of paper.

Maps. History is the study of the flow of events over time in specific places. Students' historical knowledge will be enhanced if they spend significant amounts of time working with maps as well as with timelines.

1. Which geographic term includes the location of the other three?
   - a. The Middle East.
   - b. The Levant.
   - c. Mesopotamia.
   - d. The Fertile Crescent.

2. Cuneiform seems to have been invented to record:
   - a. Commercial exchanges.
   - b. Military victories.
   - c. Lists of Kings.
   - d. Messages from the Gods.

3. In what ways was life in the first cities quite different from previous village living? In cities:
   - a. Most families were wealthier and healthier than before.
   - b. The social class differences were much greater than before.
   - c. Both of the above are correct.
   - d. None of the above is correct.

4. What factors contributed to the destruction of the first cities in the Levant?
   - a. Earthquakes.
   - b. Torrential rain and flooded rivers.
   - c. Sand storms.
   - d. Global warming.

5. In addition to the Black Sea flood, the Biblical flood story probably is related to flooding of the:
   - a. Nile River. c. Euphrates River.
   - b. Jordan River d. Danube River.

6. Which of the following explains why the Jordan River Valley is about 1000 feet below sea level?
   - a. Wind and water erosion.
   - b. Tectonic plate movement.
   - c. A world-wide flood.
   - d. Impact of a large meteor.

7. Where do Hebrew Bible stories take place? In:
   - a. Mesopotamia.
   - b. Canaan.
   - c. Egypt.
   - d. All of the above are correct.

8. Most of the Hebrew Bible consists of writings that come from lands near the:
   - a. Aegean Sea.
   - b. Red Sea.
   - c. Black Sea.
   - d. Mediterranean Sea.

9. Which modern nation exists in the land once called Canaan?
   - a. Egypt.
   - b. Iraq.
   - c. Turkey.
   - d. Lebanon.

10. In what nation are the ruins of the earliest known urban centers located? (Use question 9 answers.)

11. About 5500 BCE a huge flood occurred when water poured into the Black sea from:
   - a. The Sea of Marmara
   - b. The Red Sea.
   - c. The Sea of Galilee.
   - d. The Dead Sea.

12. In Egyptian hieroglyphics, a symbol generally represented:
   - a. A complete sentence.
   - b. A complete word.
   - c. A particular syllable
   - d. A particular sound.

13. In Mesopotamian cuneiform, what did a written symbol generally represent? Use the answers in the above question.

1. Which of these time periods is the most ancient?
    a. 800 B.C.
    b. 1800 BCE.
    c. 800 A.D.
    d. 1800 CE.

2. Which of the above time periods is the most recent. (Use question one answers.)

3. Biblical stories about Abraham and Moses are based upon:
    a. Mesopotamian cuneiform written records.
    b. Egyptian hieroglyphic records.
    c. Israelite oral traditions.
    d. Specific calendar dates given in the Bible.

4. Biblical stories concerning Abraham correspond most closely to the situation in the Middle East about:
    a. 3500 BCE.
    b. 1800 BCE.
    c. 1000 BCE.
    d. 800 BCE.

5. One biblical story about Abraham describes a camel caravan. When were camels domesticated and first used in caravans? Use the answers in the above question.

6. Using archaeological evidence along with biblical clues, when was the "time of Abraham"? Use question four answers.

7. In societies without writing, accurate history of the group can be remembered for:
    a. Only a few generations.
    b. Several hundred years.
    c. Several thousand years
    d. Experts such as Vansina are unsure which of the above answers is correct.

8. If a society is without writing, unrelated historical events:
    a. From many time periods tend to merge together.
    b. Tend to become focused on a one or a few cultural heroes.
    c. Are forgotten after a few generations unless they become a part of a group's mythic stories..
    d. All of the above are correct.

9. There is evidence from outside of the Bible for the historical existence of which of these biblical heroes?
    a. Abraham.
    b. Moses.
    c. David.
    d. All of the above are correct.

10. The story of Moses' dramatic departure from Egypt with thousands of Israelite followers is found:
    a. In the Hebrew Bible.
    b. In Egyptian hieroglyphic records.
    c. Mesopotamian cuneiform records.
    d. All of the above are correct.

11. Archbishop James Ussher is correctly associated with:
    a. Promoting the idea that scholars should use the "CE" and "BCE" calendar symbols.
    b. The idea that the earth is only a few thousand years old.
    c. Devising the Christian calendar.
    d. Finding the ruins of the ancient city of Ur in Mesopotamia.

12. The B.C./A.D. calendar was first devised about:
    a. 1000 years ago.
    b. 1500 years ago.
    c. 2000 years ago.
    d. 2500 years ago.

1. The first evidence from Egyptian records that the Israelites existed as a separate Canaanite people is from about:

   a. 1800 BCE. c. 800 BCE.
   b. 1200 BCE. d. 400 BCE.

2. Crops grown in the Levant depend upon:

   a. Natural rain
   b. Irrigation from the Nile River.
   c. Irrigation from the Euphrates River.
   d. Water from melting winter snow.

3. Why did city living in the Levant come to an end about 1200 BCE?

   a. The Black Sea flooded the area.
   b. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flooded the area.
   c. Massive earthquakes.
   d. All of the above are correct.

4. What additional reasons brought about the downfall of the Levant cities about 1200 BCE?

   a. Crop failures/too little rain.
   b. Weapons of iron that increased wartime destructiveness.
   c. Lack of adequate food storage systems for bad economic times.
   d. All of the above are correct.

5. When Hebrews first appear in the archaeological record they live:

   a. On the Mediterranean coast.
   b. In rugged Levant hill country.
   c. In Mesopotamia.
   d. The Nile Delta.

6. Archaeologists have found that Jerusalem in the 900s BCE already had:

   a. Great palaces
   b. Huge storehouses for grain like those in Egypt.
   c. Both of the above are correct.
   d. None of the above are correct.

7. The first 5 Bible books are called:

   a. The Torah.
   b. The Pentateuch.
   c. Both of these terms are used
   d. Neither term is correct.

8. Archaeologists find that in the 900s BCE Hebrews living in villages near Jerusalem:

   a. Led simple lives.
   b. Supported huge armies that enabled King David to conquer many surrounding lands.
   c. Grew rich through the trading networks that ran from Assyria to Mesopotamia.
   d. Worshiped only Yahweh.

9. In the 900s BCE Hebrews in villages near Jerusalem had:

   a. Stone houses.
   b. Living quarters placed in an oval pattern like nomads' tents.
   c. Both of the above are correct.
   d. None of the above are correct.

10. The first Hebrew writing system was most like that developed by the:

   a. Phoenicians.
   b. Egyptians.
   c. Assyrians
   d. people in Ur.

11. The biblical story of Moses is supported by what evidence from sources outside of the Bible?

   a. Egyptian hieroglyphic records.
   b. Assyrian cuneiform records.
   c. Archaeological findings in the present nation of Israel.
   d. None of the above are correct.

12. What evidence supports the biblical story of Moses escaped from Egypt because of miraculous help? Use the answer choices in the above question.

1. The Bible pictures the Israelites' transition from rural living to glorious statehood as taking place:
   a. Gradually over a period of about a thousand years.
   b. Over a period of a few hundred years.
   c. Rapidly, within less than a century.
   d. None of the above are correct.

2. Archaeologists such as Finkelstein say that the Israelite king Solomon:
   a. Never existed as a person.
   b. May have existed, but could not have had a kingdom such as the Bible describes.
   c. Is described in Egyptian records as a enemy and opponent of the Egyptian pharaohs.
   d. Had a glorious kingdom much like the Bible describes.

3. The stories about King Solomon reached their final biblical form:
   a. Before he died.
   b. Within a generation of his death.
   c. About 700 BCE, more than 200 years after his death.
   d. Only after he had been dead more than 400 years.

4. Megiddo, Hazor & Gezer are names of:
   a. Early Israelite Kings.
   b. Early cities in the Levant.
   c. Archaeologists who found the remains of Solomon's palaces.
   d. Middle Eastern Goddesses.

5. (Use the answer list in the above question.) Ashtoreth, Asherah and Astarte are the names of:

6. During David's time (mid 900s BCE), archaeologists such as Finkelstein say Jerusalem was:
   a. A small rural village.
   b. A medium sized town of several thousand people.
   c. A city with over 10,000 people.
   d. The largest city in the world at the time with well over 100,000 people.

7. When presenting accounts of cultural heroes such as David, oral storytellers:
   a. Added imagined details to make the stories interesting to their listeners.
   b. Told the stories in the same way each time to maintain accuracy.
   c. Had the same concept of history as historians have today.
   d. Found that stories became shorter over time as they forgot details.

8. There is sound archaeological evidence that Solomon:
   a. Had a huge palace in Jerusalem.
   b. Built a temple in Jerusalem in for Yahweh only. No other gods.
   c. Both of the above are correct.
   d. None of the above is correct.

9. In the 900s BCE, which society(ies) had one chief god (and lesser ones):
   a. Only the Israelites.
   b. Only the Israelites and Philistines.
   c. Many Fertile Crescent peoples had one chief god and lesser ones.
   d. Gods were equal in Middle East.

10. After 1950, earlier archaeological data supporting the Solomon Bible story
   a. Was contradicted by new evidence.
   b. Was neither contradicted nor reinforced.
   c. Was somewhat reinforced.
   d. Was strongly reinforced.

1. The Kingdom of Israel was:
   a. North of Judah.
   b. South of Judah.
   c. East of Judah.
   d. West of Judah.

2. Israel's economic wealth mostly was based upon what trade items?
   a. Papyrus and pottery.
   b. Wheat and barley.
   c. Copper and tin.
   d. Grape wine and olive oil.

3. In the years before 730 BCE, Israel was a vassal state of the:
   a. Babylonians
   b. Assyrians.
   c. Egyptians.
   d. None of the above are correct.

4. 722 BCE was a time of disaster for the city of:
   a. Samaria.
   c. Jerusalem.
   b. Babylon.
   d. Ur.

5. The first Hebrew writing had:
   a. Letters for consonant sounds.
   b. Spaces between words.
   c. Marks-that indicated where sentences stopped.
   d. All of the above are correct.

6. Which of the following people was a king of Israel?
   a. Hezekiah.
   c. Manasseh
   b. Omri
   d. Sennacherib

7. Jerusalem first became a city (over 10,000 people) within a few years after:
   a. David made it his capital.
   b. King Solomon built his temple to Yahweh in the city.
   c. The Kingdom of Israel was destroyed.
   d. Pharaoh Nechos II invaded Megiddo.

8. Why was Judah able to grow wealthy under King Manasseh? Because:
   a. The powerful Kingdom of Assyria protected it.
   b. It was on the north/south perfume and spice trade route.
   c. Both of the above are correct
   d. All of the above are correct.

9. What additional factors enabled Judah to grow wealthy under King Manasseh?
   a. Judah was protected by high mountains along its borders.
   b. Olive oil and wine were produced.
   c. Both of the above are correct
   d. None of the above are correct.

10. What animal species was tamed shortly before 1000 BCE that enabled Jerusalem to become a rich city?
   a. Pigs.
   c. Camels.
   b. Horses.
   d. Cattle.

11. Archaeologists would be LEAST likely to find the remains of what animal in Hebrew villages near Jerusalem after 900 BCE? Use question 10 answers.

12. Josiah was a king of Judah who:
   a. Ruled during the 600s BCE.
   b. Focused upon the worship of one God according to the Bible.
   c. Established the Jewish Passover as an enduring Jewish ritual.
   d. All of the above are correct.

13. Using only the Bible as a source of data, one can claim that Josiah was a king of Judah who was:
   a. Taken captive by the Assyrians.
   b. Conquered by Babylonians.
   c. A pacifist who refused to use military force to save Jerusalem.
   d. Allied with Egypt in later years, but was then killed by them.

1. What Hebrew historical era began in the 580s BCE? The:
   a. Exodus from Egypt.
   b. First Israelite Kings period.
   c. Divided Kingdom period.
   d. Babylonian Captivity.

2. Which groups of Hebrews lost their political identity when their nation was captured? The:
   a. Israelites in 722 BCE.
   b. People of Judah in the 500s BCE.
   c. Both of the above are correct.
   d. None of the above are correct.

3. The Chaldean king whose armies conquered Judah was:
   a. Cyrus. c. Nebuchadnezzar.
   b. Jehoiakim. d. Jeremiah.

4. What king of Judah was captured and taken to Babylon? Use above answers.

5. What king allowed the Hebrews in Babylon to return to their homes in and around Jerusalem? Use above answers.

6. Hebrews in Babylon could return to the Jerusalem area after 538 BCE because:
   a. The Persians were defeated by the Chaldeans (Neo-Babylonians).
   b. The Hebrews successfully revolted against the Persians.
   c. Both of the above are correct.
   d. None of the above are correct.

7. After returning to Jerusalem from Babylon, leaders focused upon:
   a. Building a temple to Yahweh.
   b. Fighting the Egyptians.
   c. Rebelling against the Persians; reestablishing their independence.
   d. Gaining the goodwill of Hebrews who had not been taken captive.

8. Philip Davies is an archaeologist who says he thinks that:
   a. All Old Testament books were essentially written after 500 BCE.
   b. Josiah's religious dictates are the beginning of Judaism.
   c. The stories in the Torah are historically accurate.
   d. Scholars can learn very little about when the Bible was written.

9. If the Old Testament was basically written after 500 BCE, the Temple scribes probably based their writings on:
   a. Old scrolls that may have survived.
   b. Surviving king lists.
   c. Oral folk tales.
   d. All of the above are correct.

10. The Tower of Babel story in the Bible probably was inspired by what the authors knew of:
   a. Mesopotamian ziggurats.
   b. Egyptian pyramids.
   c. Volcanoes.
   d. Solomon's Temple.

11. The Sinai Desert is most closely linked to:
   a. Abraham. c. King David.
   b. Moses. d. King Josiah.

12. Academic biblical historians believe Jewish priests who wrote the book of Leviticus were describing their responsibilities about:
   a. 1800 BCE, a traditional biblical time of Abraham.
   b. 1200 BCE, a traditional biblical time of Moses.
   c. 800 BCE, when Israel and Judah existed as independent states.
   d. 400 BCE, when the Jews were Persian subjects living in Yehud.

1. The Jews lived under Persian rule for:
    - a. About 50 years.
    - b. About 100 years.
    - c. About 150 years.
    - d. About 200 years.

2. During the Persian period:
    - a. The Torah was put in essentially its present day form.
    - b. The Jews in Yehud were treated more cruelly than they had been previously under the Chaldeans.
    - c. Both of the above are correct.
    - d. None of the above are correct.

3. Monotheism is the belief that:
    - a. Each family has its own favorite household god.
    - b. There is one god for a city, and different cities have different gods.
    - c. There is one god for an entire culture, but each culture has its own god.
    - d. There is one universal god.

4. According to the Bible, why was there a world-wide flood during Noah's time?
    - a. People's sinfulness.
    - b. Yahweh was battling Marduk.
    - c. The Devil cause it.
    - d. Huge earthquakes outside of Yahweh's control caused waters to well up from the deep.

5. Which Bible book takes the story of the Hebrews from Solomon through the histories of Israel and Judah and end with a summary of the Babylonian Captivity?
    - a. Exodus. c. Job.
    - b. Proverbs d. Chronicles.

6. Which of these books essentially is a collection of Jewish folkwisdom? Use above answers.

7. How might a Hindu historian view the miracles described in the Hebrew Bible?
    - a. As verified, since they are biblical.
    - b. As relating to the religious faith of Jews and Christians.
    - c. Capable of being proved through science.
    - d. All of the above are correct..

8. Scholars such as Philip Davies:
    - a. Deny that Josiah ever existed.
    - b. Doubt that Josiah started any great move toward monotheism.
    - c. Give Josiah credit for creating modern Judaism.
    - d. Believe Josiah wrote the books found in the Torah.

9. Why were the Jewish priests so powerful during the Persian Era?
    - a. No Jewish king existed with whom they had to share power.
    - b. They were cooperating with the Persian overlords.
    - c. Both of the above are correct.
    - d. None of the above is correct.

10. Which of the following Bible books were written after 500 BCE?
    - a. Ezra, Nehemiah and Ezekiel.
    - b. Hosea, Joel, Amos and Obadiah.
    - c. Jonah, Micah, Nahum and Ruth.
    - d. All of the above are correct.

11. Which of the above lists (question 10) includes a love story Bible book?

12. The account of the origin of the Bible found in these lessons is based upon.
    - a. Sacred history.
    - b. Academic history.
    - c. Both of the above about equally.
    - d. Neither sacred nor academic are found in the lessons.

1. The Jews first came under heavy Greek influence in the:
   a. 500s BCE. c. 300s BCE.
   b. 400s BCE. d. 200s BCE.

2. What term describes the merging of Greek ideas with those of the people Alexander the Great's armies conquered?
   a. Zoroastrianism. c. Yahwehism.
   b. Monotheism. d. Hellenism.

3. How did the Greek philosophers interpret stories of ancient Greek gods such as Zeus? Philosophers such as Plato thought the stories:
   a. Were accurate history.
   b. Should be interpreted allegorically for the moral truths they contained.
   c. Should be disregarded because they were not true.
   d. Should be replaced by those of the Jews.

4. Evidence that upper-class Jews were affected by Greek thought is illustrated by:
   a. The Septuagint Bible translation.
   b. The allegorical understandings of the Torah that evolved.
   c. Both of the above are correct.
   d. None of the above are correct.

5. The word Hasmonaeans is used about interchangeably with:
   a. Seleucids. c. Romans.
   b. Maccabees. d. Alexandrians.

6. Which of the following statements provides the most complete and accurate description of Philo? Philo:
   a. Was a Hellenized Jew
   b. A resident of Jerusalem
   c. Lived at the time of Alexander the Great
   d. Believed the Torah was historically true since Adam's time.

7. The Jews managed to successfully revolt against their Greek rulers in the:
   a. 400s BCE. c. 200s BCE.
   b. 300s BCE. d. 100s BCE.

8. Once in power Hasmonaean rulers:
   a. Believed in a literal understanding of the Torah, which they practiced.
   b. Quickly became Hellenized as individuals but also tried to satisfy the Jerusalem temple priests.
   c. Conquered many surrounding territories and, for a time, had about as much power as the Romans.
   d. Tried to rid their kingdom of all Greek influence.

9. The Romans secured effective control of Judea in the:
   a. 300s BCE.
   b. 200s BCE.
   c. 100s BCE.
   d. Century before the Common Era.

10. When Herod the Great became king:
    a. About all of the Old Testament scrolls had been written.
    b. Judaism was splintering into many groups each with a different understanding of the Torah.
    c. Both of the above are correct.
    d. None of the above are correct.

11. The 1 and 2 Maccabees are:
    a. Books in the Catholic Bible.
    b. Books in the Protestant Bible.
    c. Both of the above are correct.
    d. None of the above are correct.

12. 1 and 2 Maccabees describe the:
    a. Hasmonaean revolts against the Seleucids.
    b The history of Hasmonaean rule.
    c. The end of Hasmonaean rule.
    d. Roman rule after the end of Hasmonaean rule

1. King Herod the Great worked to:
   - a. Eliminate Christianity.
   - b. Spread Judaism throughout the Roman world.
   - c. Free the Jews from Roman control.
   - d. Eliminate cruelty and rule in a non-violent way.

2. The word *messiah* means:
   - a. Savior.
   - c. Angel.
   - b. Governor.
   - d. Autocrat.

3. Why was Judea put under direct Roman control shortly after the beginning of the common era? Because of frequent:
   - a Jewish rebellions
   - b. Natural catastrophes such as earthquakes.
   - c. Military threats from Persia.
   - d. Economic collapse in Judea.

4. The worst Jewish defeat by the Romans came in:
   - a. 6 CE
   - c. 70 CE
   - b. 30s CE
   - d. 90s CE

5. This defeat (question 4) resulted in:
   - a. The end of Jewish rebellions.
   - b. Closing the Hebrew Bible.
   - c. Closer Jewish/Christian ties.
   - d. No new Jewish religious literature being written.

6. This defeat (see above) resulted in:
   - a. The destruction Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.
   - b. Changing the Name of Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina.
   - c. Both of the above are correct.
   - d. None of the above is correct.

7. This defeat (question 4) resulted in:
   - a. The abolishment of the Sanhedrin, --the supreme Jewish court.
   - b. Ending Temple sacrifices.
   - c. Both of the above are correct.
   - d. None of the above are correct.

8. After 130 CE Jews who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire were:
   - a. Systematically persecuted.
   - b. Prohibited from leaving Jerusalem.
   - c. Both of the above are correct.
   - d. None of the above are correct.

9. Even though the Jews were scattered after 130 BCE, they still had:
   - a. Their king who lived in exile.
   - b. Their Torah and other Scriptures.
   - c. Both of the above are correct.
   - d. None of the above are correct.

10. Those Bible-like Jewish writings that were not included in the Hebrew Bible are called the:
    - a. Apocrypha
    - b. Pseudoepigrapha.
    - c. Both of the above are correct.
    - d. None of the above are correct. No such "Bible-like" books existed.

11. After about 100 CE Jewish scribes:
    - a. Made no new Bibles. Jews used Christian Bibles from this time on.
    - b. Edited their new copies much as they had in previous centuries.
    - c. Made new Bibles, but kept them secret by hiding them in caves.
    - d. Made new copies exactly like the ones from which they copied.

12. Judaism and Christianity divided into separate religions:
    - a. Almost immediately, within a year.
    - b. Quickly, within one man's lifetime.
    - c. Slowly, over a couple of centuries.
    - d. Only after about 1000 years.

13. Judaism did not grow as rapidly as Christianity because the Jewish faith was:
    - a. Persecuted more by Romans.
    - b. Rural, not found in Roman cities.
    - c. Not demanding enough.
    - d. None of the above is correct.

1. About 50 CE there were Jewish groups living in Judea who believed that Jesus was:
   - a. A holy spirit sent by Yahweh.
   - b. An eternal spirit that had entered the body of a real man.
   - c. Both of the above are correct.
   - d. None of the above are correct. No Jews in 50 CE believed in Jesus.

2. Some first century CE Jews had "Buddhist-like understandings." This statement means that:
   - a. They believed in reincarnation.
   - b. Jesus did not become divine until he was crucified.
   - c. Both of the above are correct.
   - d. None of the above are correct.

3. When Constantine became Emperor, the Roman Empire was:
   - a. Still quite small.
   - b. On the verge of becoming great.
   - c. At the height of its power.
   - d. Going downhill, as it had been for several centuries.

4. Emperor Constantine ruled:
   - a. About 100 years after Jesus lived.
   - b. About 300 years after Jesus lived.
   - c. About 700 years after Jesus lived.
   - d. About 1000 years after Jesus lived.

5. When did the Roman and Byzantine Christian churches officially split apart becoming separate institutions? Use question four answers.

6. Which of the following people would have been classified as a Christian heretic when Constantine was Emperor?
   - a. The Bishops allied with Rome.
   - b. The Gnostic Christians in Egypt.
   - c. The followers of Paul of Tarsus.
   - d. All of the above were heretics..

7. Which of the following books are in the Roman Catholic Bible but are NOT in Protestant Bibles?
   - a. Wisdom, Judith and Baruch
   - b. Leviticus, Numbers and Joshua
   - c. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel
   - d. Hosea, Joel and Amos.

8. Jerome (late 300s-early 400s CE) was
   - a. The Roman ruler who made Christianity an official religion.
   - b. The man who translated the Old Testament from Greek into Latin.
   - c. Believed that the Old Testament should NOT be Christian Scripture.
   - d. A famous Christian martyr.

9. England's King Henry VIII and Martin Luther both:
   - a. Became Protestant leaders.
   - b. Translated the Old Testament into languages of the common people.
   - c. Lead armies into battle.
   - d. Eventually became Catholic Saints.

10. What Christians are most likely to believe that the Bible is the one final source of God's commands?
    - a. Orthodox Christians.
    - b. Roman Catholics.
    - c. Agnostics.
    - d. Christian Protestants..

11. Studying the Old Testament enables a historian to see that human ideas about:
    - a. Morality change with time.
    - b. God change with time.
    - c. Both of the above are correct.
    - d. None of the above is correct.

12. *Vulgate* is the name of a:
    - a. Latin language Bible.
    - b. A German tribe that invaded Rome.
    - c. A group of Protestant Reformers.
    - d. God found in the Old Testament.

1. Which Bible consists of 24 books.
   a. The Hebrew Bible.
   b. The Catholic Bible.
   c. The Orthodox Christian Bible.
   d. The Protestant Bible.

2. Which branch of the Christian church preserved the Greek version of the Old Testament through the western Europe's "Dark Age" period?
   a. Roman Catholics.
   b. Orthodox Christians
   c. Protestants.
   d. Syrian Church.

3. Which part of the Hebrew Bible was written most recently. The part that Jews call:
   a. The Law (The Torah).
   b. The Prophets (including the books of Joshua and Judges).
   c. Other Writings.
   d. None of the above is correct. Biblical historians think all of the Old Testament books were written at about the same time.

4. What people in the U.S. today are influenced by stories from the Hebrew Bible?
   a. Jews only.
   b. Only Jews and Christians.
   c. Jews, Christians and other religious people.
   d. Almost all U.S. citizens regardless of their religious beliefs.

5. At the time of Jesus the books of the Hebrew Bible were:
   a. On separate scrolls.
   b. Divided into chapters.
   c. Divided into verses within chapters.
   d. All of the above are correct.

6. Which of the divisions within the books of the Hebrew Bible help readers understand the intent of the author?
   a. The chapter divisions.
   b. The verse divisions.
   c. Both of the Above.
   d. Neither of the above.

7. Which of the following accurately describe why scholars brought Greek Bibles to Western Europe in the 1400s? Because:
   a. Of the ravages of the Black Death epidemic.
   b. The salaries were much higher at the new universities that were being established in France and England.
   c. Muslims had destroyed the Byzantine Empire.
   d. They had been exiled from Constantinople because of their heretical Orthodox beliefs.

8. Dividing the chapters of Genesis into into verse segments developed when:
   a. Moses used them.
   b. Josiah made his reforms.
   c. Jewish rabbis made notations when they stopped to translate a the passage for listeners.
   d. Jerome used them to make a passage clear.

9. The Old Testament Torah first was translated from Hebrew to:
   a. Greek.
   b. English.
   c. German
   d. French

10. The King James Bible helped:
   a. Correct errors in the Vulgate.
   b. Standardize the English language.
   c. Catholics more than Protestants.
   d. Increase England's economy.

1. In 600 CE Jerusalem was a part of the:
   a. Islamic civilization.
   b. West Roman Empire.
   c. Byzantine Empire.
   d. Roman Catholicism.

2. Allah is:
   a. An Arabic name for God, found in Bibles written in Arabic.
   b. Very similar to a Hebrew name for God.
   c. A Muslim name for God.
   d. All of the above are correct.

3. The Koran is as long as an average:
   a. Magazine.
   b. Book.
   c. Set of encyclopedias.
   d. School Library.

4. The word *Muslim* means one who:
   a. Surrenders.
   b. Conquers infidels.
   c. Seeks peace.
   d. Rules over an Islamic state.

5. The most direct link made with the Israelites in the Koran is established through biblical:
   a. Adam and Eve.
   b. Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael
   c. Moses and Aaron.
   d. Jesus, Peter and Paul.

6. Mecca is the name of:
   a. Hagar's son by Abraham.
   b. The founder of Islam.
   c. The hill where the Dome of the Rock is found.
   d. Muslims' most holy city.

7. The Koran is older than the:
   a. Vulgate Bible.
   b. Septuagint Old Testament
   c. Dead Sea Scrolls
   d. The King James Bible Version.

8. The Koran's focus on achieving peace relates mostly to relations among:
   a. Members of the Islamic faith.
   b. Muslims and non-Muslims.
   c. World leaders and their subjects.
   d. People in paradise.

9. The cultural Golden Age of Islam was from about:
   a. 400 CE to 800 CE.
   b. 800 CE to 1200 CE.
   c. 1200 CE to 1600 CE.
   d. 1600 CE to 2000 CE.

10. Who believes that the Koran contains the words of God?
    a. Muslims.
    b. Christians.
    c. Jews
    d. All of the above groups.

11. The Koran was put in written form by:
    a. Muhammad.
    b. Muhammad's wives.
    c. Masoretes.
    d. Followers of Muhammad long after Muhammad died.

12. The concepts of the afterlife found in the Koran are most like:
    a. Those of the Israelites before 1000 BCE.
    b. Those of the Zoroastrians in Persia after 500 BCE.
    c. Those of the Greeks at the time of Alexander the Great.
    d. Those of the Hindus during the time of Muhammad.

13. The Old Testament prophet that is discussed at greatest length in the Koran is:
    a. Daniel.
    b. Moses.
    c. David.
    d. Adam.

Chapter One

1. a
2. a
3. b
4. a
5. c
6. b
7. d
8. d
9. d
10. b
11. a
12. b
13. b

Chapter Two

1. b
2. d
3. c
4. d
5. c
6. d
7. a
8. d
9. c
10. a
11. b
12. b

Chapter Three

1. b
2. a
3. c
4. d
5. b
6. d
7. c
8. a
9. c
10. a
11. d
12. d

Chapter Four

1. c
2. b
3. d
4. b
5. d
6. a
7. a
8. d
9. c
10. a

Chapter Five

1. a
2. d
3. b
4. a
5. a
6. b
7. c
8. c
9. b
10. c
11. a
12. d
13. d

Chapter Six

1. d
2. a
3. c
4. b
5. a
6. d
7. a
8. a
9. d
10. a
11. b
12. d

Chapter Seven

1. d
2. a
3. d
4. a
5. d
6. b
7. b
8. b
9. c
10. d
11. c
12. b

Chapter Eight

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. c
5. b
6. a
7. d
8. b
9. d
10. c
11. a
12. a

Chapter Nine

1. b
2. a
3. a
4. c
5. b
6. a
7. c
8. d
9. b
10. c
11. d
12. c
13. d

Chapter Ten

1. c
2. a
3. d
4. b
5. d
6. b
7. a
8. b
9. a
10. d
11. c
12. a

Chapter Eleven

1. a
2. b
3. c
4. d
5. a
6. d
7. c
8. c
9. a
10. b

Chapter Twelve

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. a
5. b
6. d
7. d
8. a
9. b
10. a
11. d
12. b
13. b

Chapter Dates for Timeline Work

Chapter One

1.	Black Sea Flood	5600 BCE
2.	First cities	3500 BCE
3.	Cities on Crete	2500 BCE
4.	Cities in Canaan	1500 BCE
5.	Three writing systems	1500 BCE

Chapter Two

1.	Bishop Ussher's date for the earth's Creation	4004 BCE
2.	Egyptian dating begins	3000 BCE
3.	Mesopotamian dating	2300 BCE
4.	Camels still wild animals	1800 BCE
5.	Egyptians note Israelites	1200 BCE
6.	Coastal Philistine villages	1200 BCE
7.	Camel caravans in use	1000 BCE
8.	No evidence of Israelites living in Egypt before	1000 BCE
9.	Caravans to Assyria	800 BCE
10.	Only oral tradition before	1000 BCE
11.	Chaldeans into Babylonia	1000 BCE
12.	Chaldeans driven from B.	700 BCE
13.	Philistine Kings	700 BCE
14	Beginning Calendar date	1 CE
15.	Christian Calendar	525 CE
16.	Western trade domination	1500 CE
17.	Ussher's calculations	1600 CE

Chapter Three

1.	Sound-symbol writing	1500 BCE
2.	Egyptian note on Israelites	1207 BCE
3.	Dry spells in Canaan	1200 BCE
4.	Canaanite cities being destroyed	1200 BCE
5.	Separate Israelite culture is emerging	1200 BCE
6.	Iron weapons being used	1200 BCE
7.	About 250 Israelite agriculaural villages exist	1000 BCE
8.	Phoenician alphabet is evolving	1000 BCE

Chapter Four

1.	Bible says Saul established first Hebrew Kingdom after	1000 BCE
2.	Time of David and Solomon Bible stories	900s BCE
3.	No archaeological evidence for David or Solomon's empire in	900s BCE
4.	Bible indicates the end of Solomon's Empire	920 BCE
5.	Egypt & Assyria at low ebbs	900s BCE
6.	Canaanite cultures (Israel included) believed in a chief god and lesser gods also	900s BCE
7.	No evidence that Hebrews had a written language in	900s BCE
8.	Final form of Torah after	500 BCE
9.	Old Testament description of Yahweh comes from after	500 BCE
10.	Biblical dating of David and Solomon's kingdom is increasingly questioned	1950 CE

Chapter Five

1.	Kingdom of Israel is noted by neighbors for first time	800s BCE
2.	Israel's King Ahab dies	852 BCE
3.	Kingdom of Israel ends	722 BCE
4.	Hezekiah begins his reign as King of Judah	727 BCE
5.	King Hezekiah dies and Manasseh becomes king	698 BCE
6.	Manasseh dies	642 BCE
7.	"Yahweh only" movement	600s BCE
8.	Josiah is king and begins his religious innovations	639 BCE
9	Assyria withdraws about	630 BCE
10.	Passover first celebrated	622 BCE
11.	Josiah is killed	609 BCE
12.	Judah is little more than an Egyptian Province	600 BCE

Chapter Six

1.	Nebuchadnezzar II becomes king of the Chaldeans	605 BCE
2.	Nebuchadnezzar defeats the Judeans	597 BCE
3.	Nebuchadnezzar returns and the Babylonian Captivity Period begins	588 BCE
4.	Nebuchadnezzar dies	562 BCE
5.	Cyrus defeats Babylonians and founds Persia, and Babylonian Captivity Period Ends	528 BCE
6.	A new temple is built in Jerusalem	500 BCE
7.	Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel likely were in existence	500 BCE

Chapter Seven

1.	Jews begin living under Persian rule (Yehud)	538 BCE
2.	All Old Testament books written or heavily edited after	500 BCE
3.	Persian rule ends	332 BCE

Chapter Eight

1.	Alexander's Armies conquer east to India	323 BCE
2.	Many Jews are speaking Greek by	290s BCE
3.	Jews first rebel against Greek Seleucids	180s BCE
4.	Jerusalem temple rededicated under Judas Maccabeus	165 BCE
5.	Hasmonaean-Seleucid conflict continues to	135 BCE
6.	Alexander Jannaeus becomes king of Judea	103 BCE
7.	Alexander Jannaeus dies	76 BCE
8.	Hasmonaen civil war begins	67 BCE
9.	Roman army marches into Jerusalem	63 BCE
10.	Romans make Herod king of Judea	40 BCE

Chapter Nine

1.	Romans' influence is strong	50 BCE
2.	Direct Roman rule of Judea	6 CE
3.	Jesus crucified in early	30s CE
4.	Rioting in Jerusalem	50 CE
5.	Widespread revolt by Jews	66 CE
6.	Romans put down rebellion	70 CE
7.	Jewish Bible closed	100 CE
8.	Major Jewish revolt	132 CE
9.	Jews completely defeated	135 CE
10.	Aelia Capitolina now stood on the site of old Jerusalem	150 CE
11.	Constantine became the Roman Emperor	306 CE
12.	Constantine dies	337 CE
13.	Distinctions between Jews & Christians becoming clear	300 CE
14.	About 10% of the Empire now Christian in	300s CE
15.	Masoretes faithfully copy Hebrew Bible century after century	500 CE
16	Christians and Jews are developing mutual hatreds	700 CE
17.	Incomplete Masoretic texts exist today from the	800s CE
18.	Best surviving Masoretic text dates from	1009 CE
19.	Bible translated into common European languages after	1400 CE
20.	Hebrew Bibles first printed	1525 CE

Chapter Ten

1.	Catholic Bible books such as Judith and Tobit written after	200 BCE
2.	Last Catholic Bible book such as Wisdom written	100 BCE
3.	Christian bishops become allies with the Roman Empire in	300s CE
4.	Jerome completes his translation of the Bible into Latin	405 CE

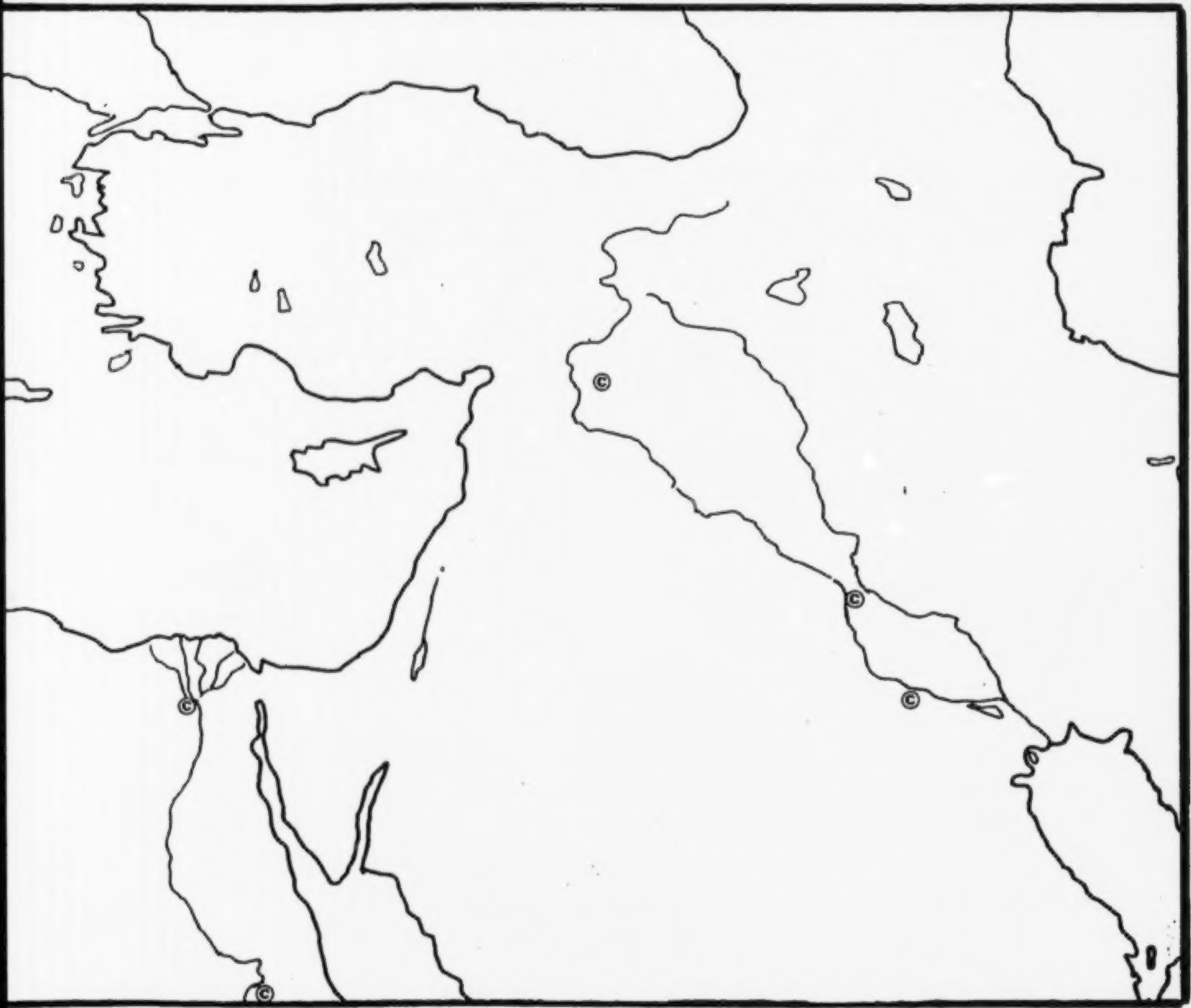
Chapter 11

1.	Torah approaching canon status	400 BCE
2.	The Prophets in the Hebrew Bible approaching canon status	300 BCE
3.	Josephus was born	30s CE
4.	Josephus opposed war with Rome	67 CE
5.	Origin born	185 CE
6.	Origin, a Christian leader who accepted only 22 Old Testament books dies.	254 CE
7.	Hebrew Bibles existed as a unified whole.	100 CE
8.	Some Christian Old Testaments still had books extra books such as Esdras	350 CE
9.	Roman Christian Old Testament fixed at Council of Laodicea	360 CE
10.	West Roman Empire was falling apart	450 CE
11.	Syrian Christian churches still had books such as Esdras in their Old Testaments	600s CE
12.	Byzantine Empire (Constantinople) end in defeat by Muslims	1451 CE
13.	First division of Bible books into chapters	1200s CE
14.	Chapter divisions used in Hebrew (Jewish) Bibles	1300s CE
15.	Hand copying of the Bible continued until printing was invented after	1400 CE
16.	Bible chapters first divided into numbered verses	1500s CE
17.	Council of Trent where Catholics reaffirm their canon	1546 CE
18.	King James Bible produced	1611 CE

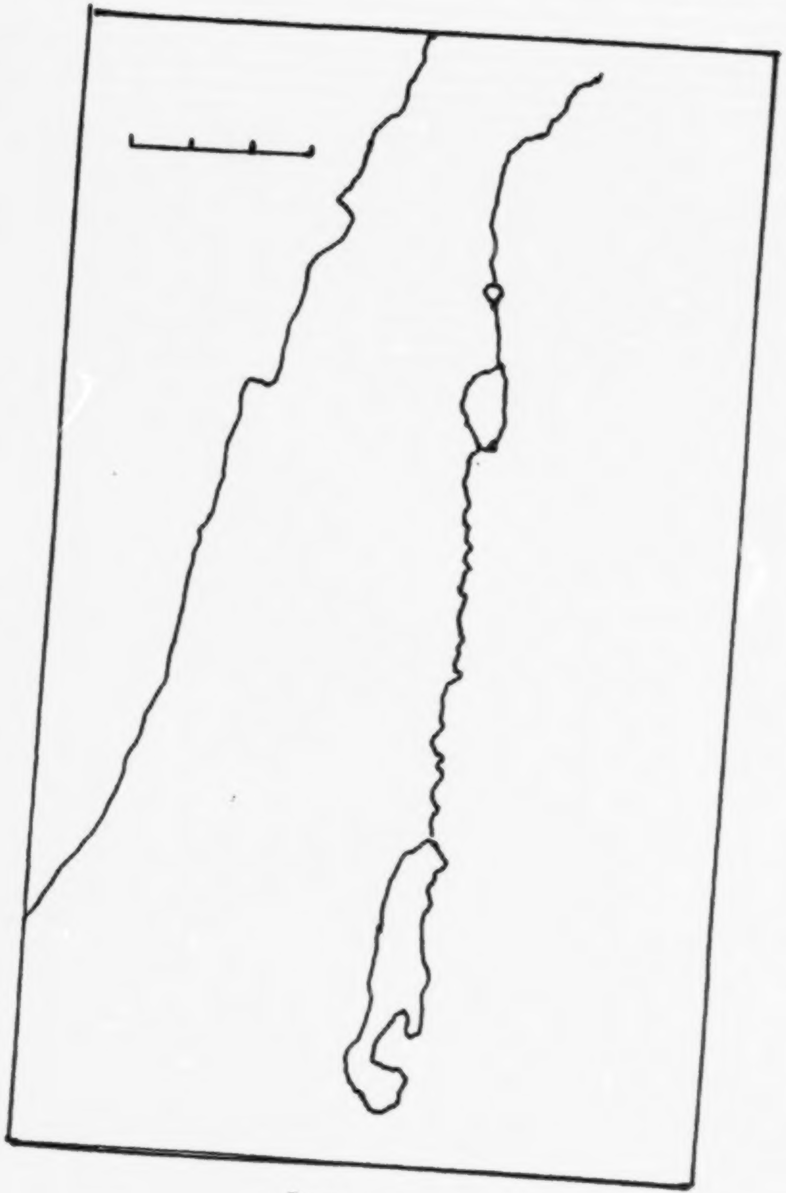
Chapter 12

1.	Jerusalem was a part of the Byzantine empire in early	600s CE
2.	Byzantine army defeated near Jerusalem by southern desert warriors	634 CE
3.	Koran in written form	800 CE
4.	Brilliant civilization develops in Muslim world	800 CE
5.	Muslim Golden Age ends	1200 CE

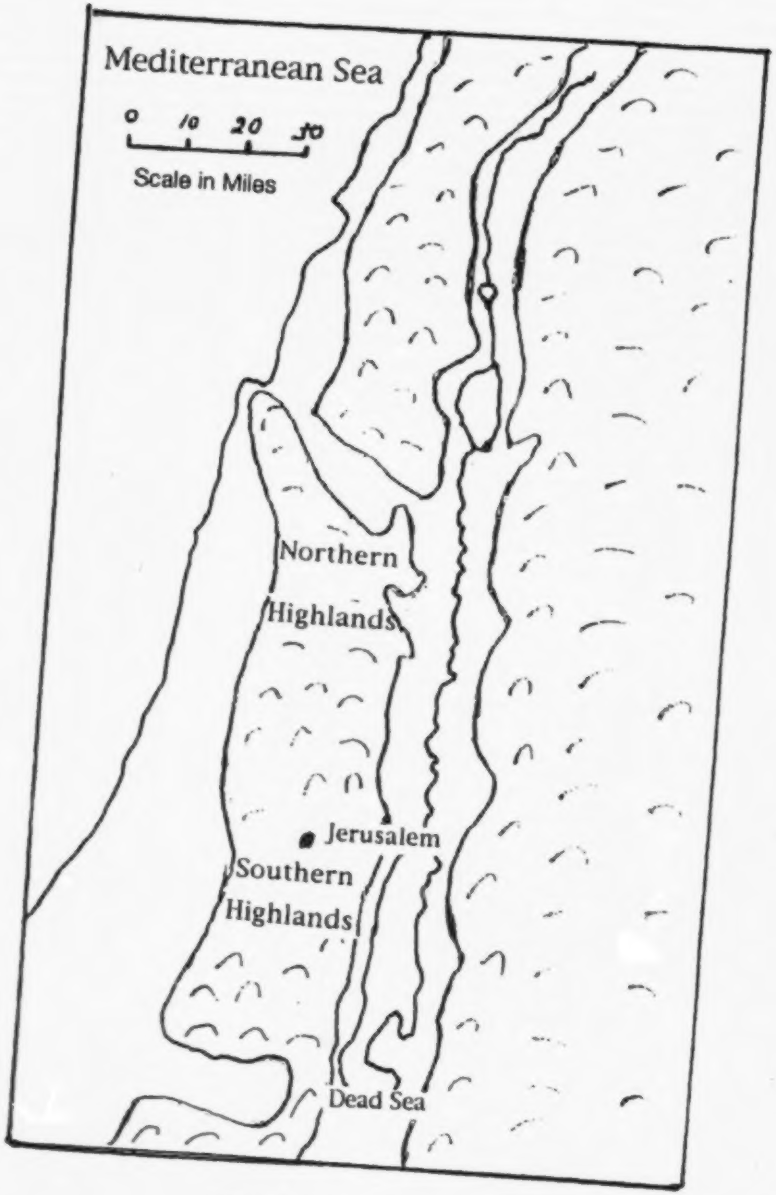
The Middle East



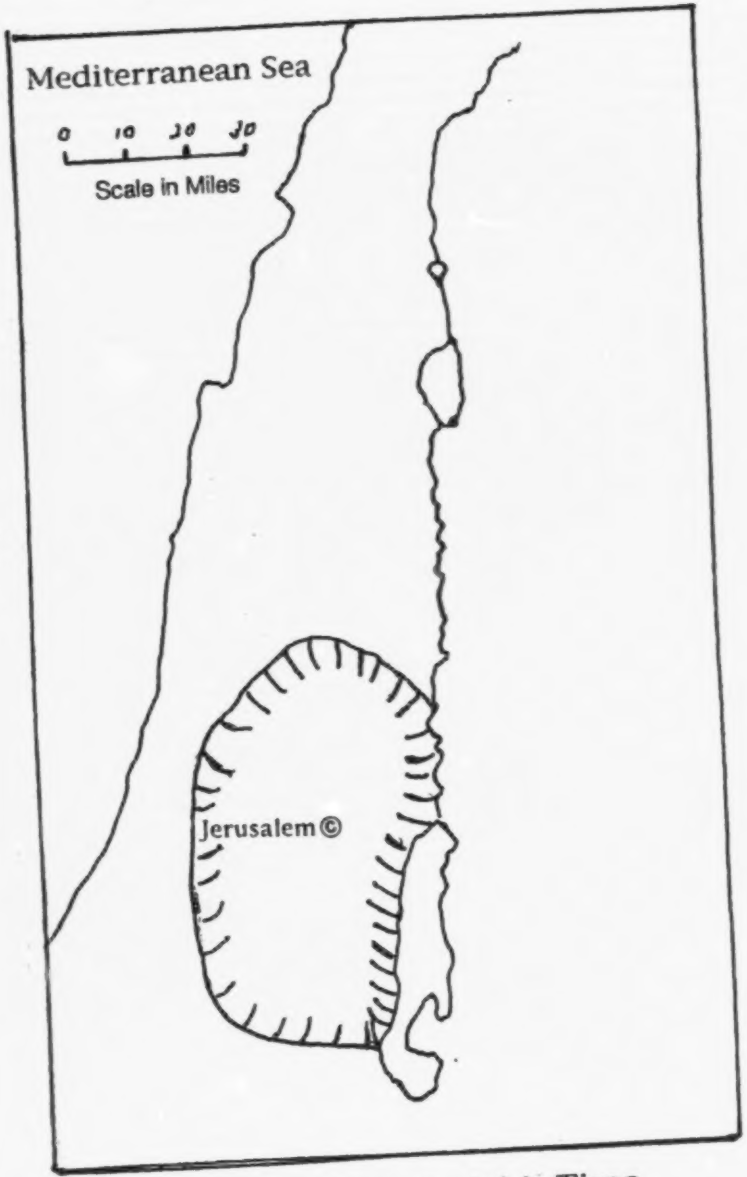
Black Sea
Aegean Sea
Nile Delta
Thebes
Dead Sea
Haran
Iraq [modern]
[Saudi Arabia]
Bosporus
Crete
Memphis
Red Sea
Jordan River
Mesopotamia
Babylon
Persian Gulf
Sea of Marmara
Cyprus
Egypt
Sinai Peninsula
Syria [modern nation]
Euphrates River
Ur
Iran [modern nation]
Greece (use arrow)
Mediterranean Sea
Nile River
Canaan
Turkey [modern]
Tigris River
Babylonia
Caspian Sea



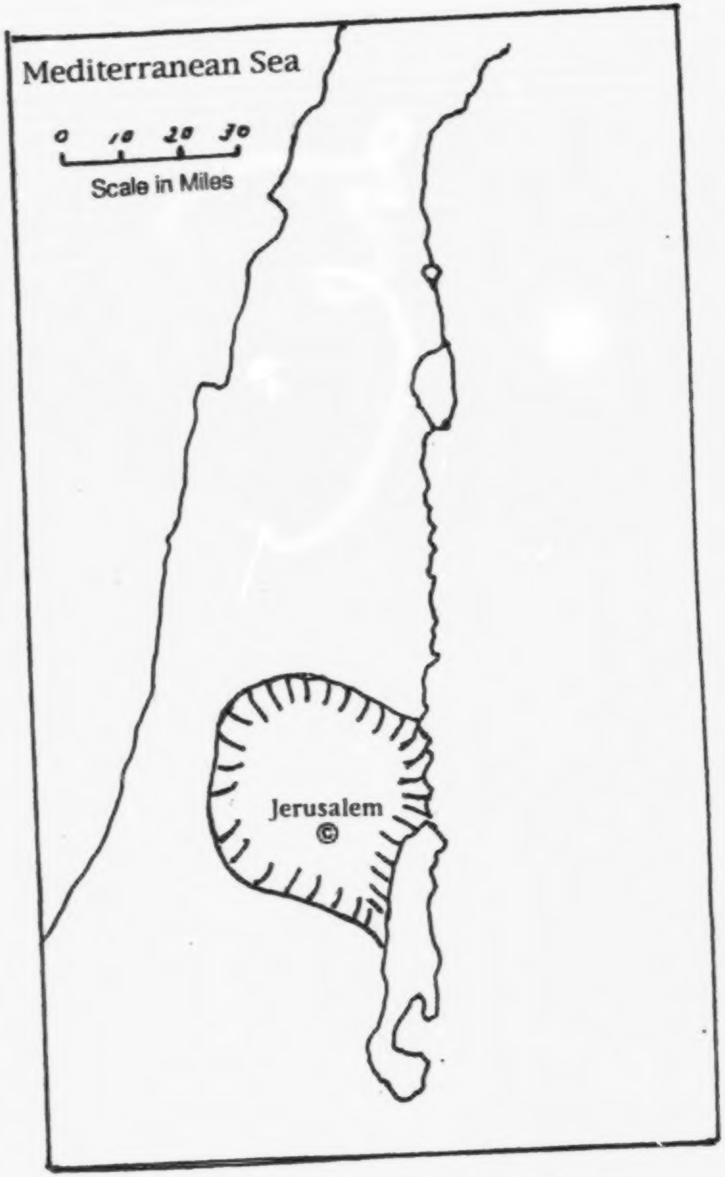
Levant



Highland Areas



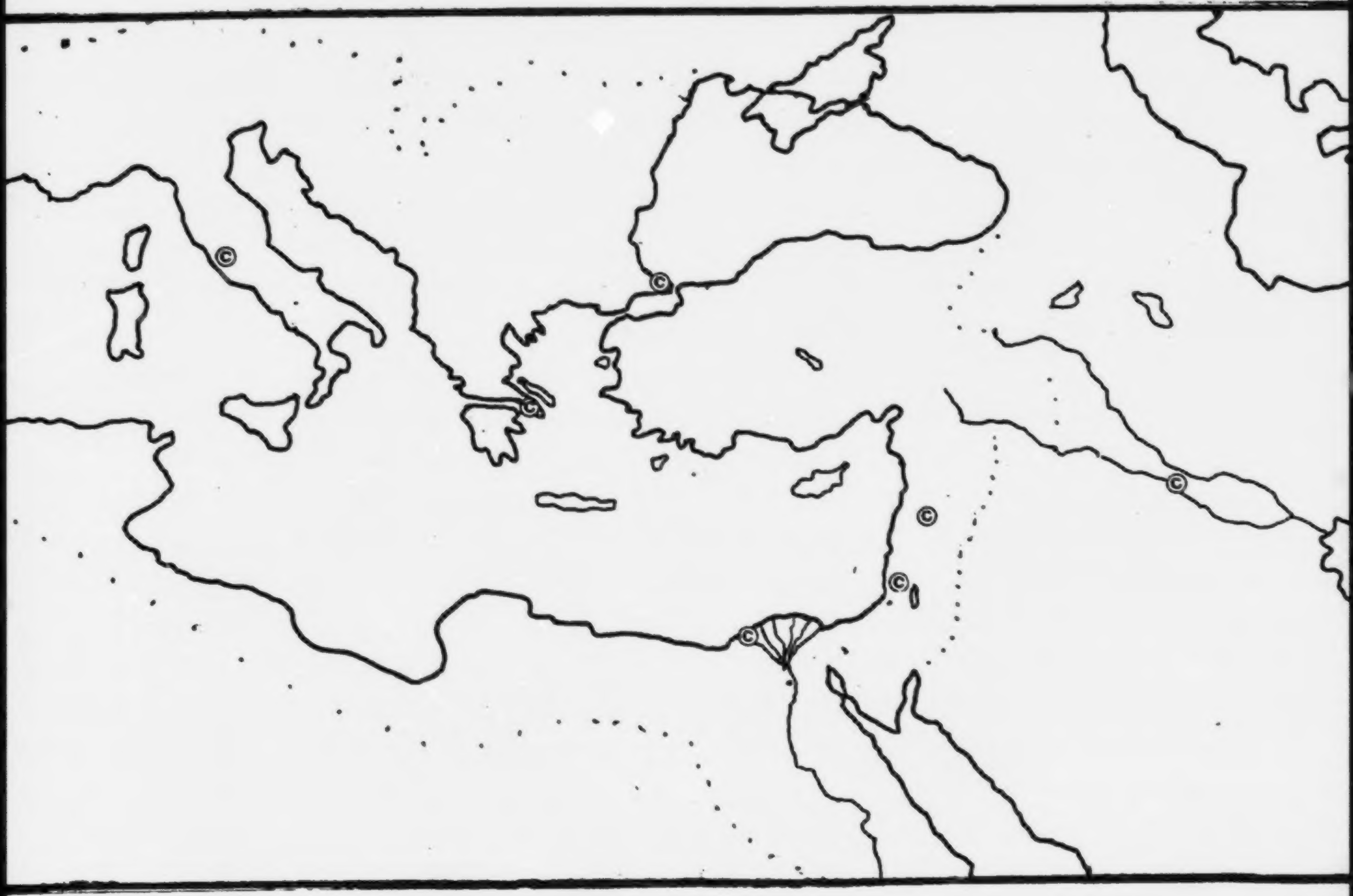
Judah during Josiah's Time



Yehud during Persian Times

(From Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, pp. 258 & 309)

Eastern part of the Roman Empire



Rome
Sicily
Syria
Jerusalem................
Caspian Sea

Macedonia
Crete
Damascus
Aelia Capitolina
Black Sea

Greece
Byzantium
Palestine
Arabia
Red Sea

Athens
Mediterranean Sea
Mesopotamia
Babylon
Alexandria

Chapter 3 Addenda

On page 19--when describing "The Israelites Before 1000 BCE--we say that:

> Before 1200 BCE several dozen ancient, Bronze-Age cities existed in the central Middle East. They had begun developing centuries earlier, and they dotted the coasts of the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean Seas. Then, between 1250 and 1175 BCE, the cities in Canaan and the Aegean Sea area were destroyed. The hill-town where Jerusalem later would stand was no exception. It too was reduced to rubble. Writing in the Middle East disappeared except in Egypt and Mesopotamia. People in Canaan and surrounding areas went back to living in small agricultural villages. Such times may be called a "Dark Age."
>
> Almost certainly environmental factors played a part in bringing on this Canaanite (and Aegean) Dark Age. (p. 19)

The following information comes from *The Independent*, Aug. 16th, 1988 as found in http://www.science.uwaterloo.ca/earth/waton/s897.html

> Most of north Britain appears to have been rendered uninhabitable more than 3000 years ago by a catastrophe resembling the "nuclear winter" that some scientists believe would follow a nuclear war. Research by archaeologists in Scotland and Northern Ireland suggests that the population of the northern half of Britain was reduced by more than 90% by a volcanic eruption that hurled vast quantities of dust into the atmosphere, partially blotting out sunlight and causing climatic changes that made agriculture impossible in upland areas.
>
> The volcano responsible was Mt. Hekla in Iceland. About 1150 BC, it erupted and spewed an estimated 12 cubic kilometres of volcanic dust into the stratosphere...."The evidence shows that nothing short of an environmental catastrophe on the scale of a nuclear winter took place in the latter half of the twelfth century BC," according to the Scottish Historic Buildings and monuments Central Excavation unit.
>
> The catastrophe was so sudden and severe that it appears to have forced hundreds of thousands of people [in what is now Scotland] to leave their upland homes to seek a new life in the already inhabited valleys and lowlands. Widespread warfare would have followed--and in the latter half of the twelfth century BC, valley settlements starts to be fortified. As populations competed for food, conflict would have spread and large numbers of displaced people would have exerted pressure on neighbouring tribes. There may have been a "domino effect" over a considerable period, with each displaced group displacing its neighbors. ...The dramatic worsening of the weather after the eruption of Hekla appears to have been the final blow that rendered many of Britain's upland areas uninhabitable....
>
> Evidence for the Hekla eruption and its disastrous climatic effects has been discovered in three places: Under the surface of the Greenland icecap, in Irish peat bogs, and on the Scottish Islands (where a layer of volcanic dust has been found).

A "nuclear winter" kind of environment in Scotland almost certainly would be evidence of severe climatic upheavals in the Middle East also.

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